STILL PLAYING BY THE ENRON RULES

The Nation.

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The Editors

ALL DELAY'S CHILDREN
Ari Berman

A HEALTHCARE FABLE
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INVISIBLE NO MORE

HOW A MOVEMENT OF IMMIGRANTS WAS MADE

ROBERTO LOVATO • MICHELLE GARCÍA
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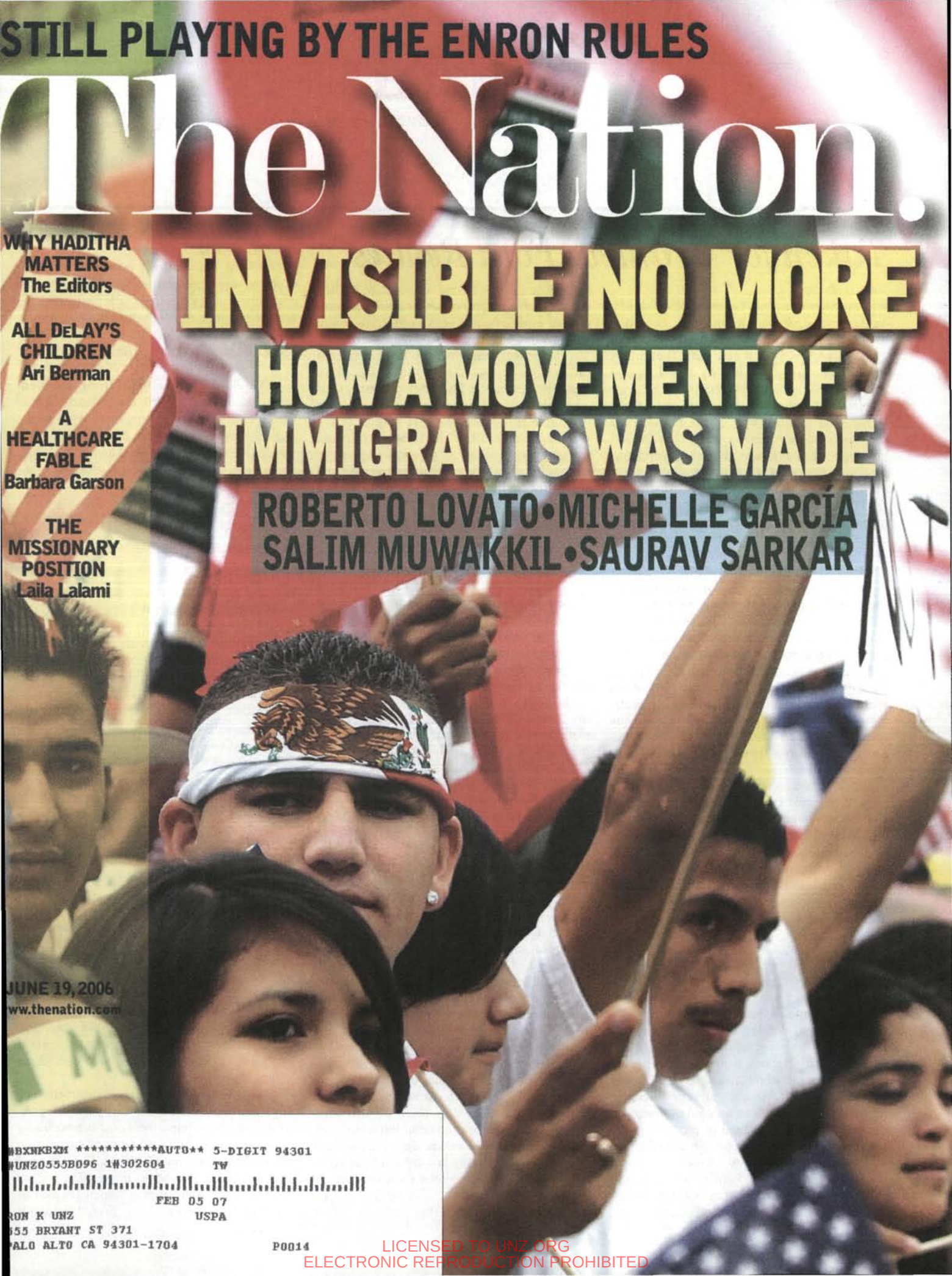

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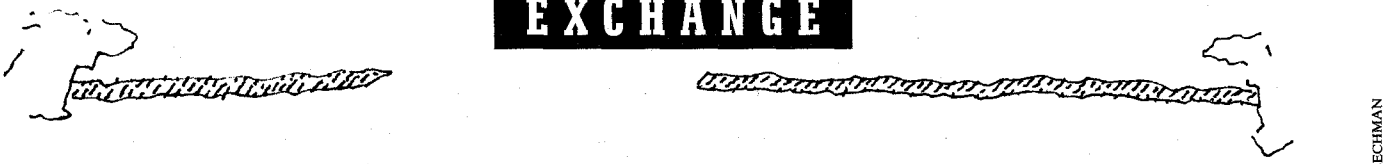
EXCHANGE



R. O. BLECHMAN

Taken for Granted: Ford Replies

New York City

■ Scott Sherman, in "Target Ford" [June 5], quotes several people who theorize about why the Ford Foundation changed its grant letter in 2003. As surprising as it may seem, the truth is simple and straightforward. We were disgusted by the vicious anti-Semitic activity at the United Nations Conference on Racism, at Durban. While Ford grantees were not responsible for the worst of this activity, the behavior and language of a few was disturbing and unacceptable to us. In response, we took a range of actions, including cessation of funding.

The language that we subsequently added to our grant letter is an explicit expression of our values—values that were implicit in our grant-making but which, after Durban, clearly needed to be explicitly articulated. Our letter has prompted useful conversations in some of the complex regions in which we work. Our values remain clear: We will not fund those who promote or engage in violence, terrorism, bigotry or the destruction of any state.

To date, only a handful of organizations have chosen not to sign our letter. Since 2004, when we revised the grant letter, approximately 4,500 have been signed by grantees who are moving forward with their work. All of the universities Sherman mentions have either signed or now applied for funds.

We continue to work in many trouble spots around the world, always seeking to promote civil society, human rights and achievement, and peaceful solutions to conflict. To suggest, as Sherman does, that the foundation has backed away from these ambitions ignores our funding for the courageous individuals and institutions worldwide who invest their energy and their faith in our shared values. MARTA L. TELLADO

Vice president for communications
The Ford Foundation

Washington, DC

■ Scott Sherman presents a very distorted picture of my actions vis-à-vis the Ford Foundation's efforts to develop a policy reflecting its commitment to progressive philanthropy and against racism. Because of my work to protect civil liberties, including leading House opposition to the Patriot Act and warrantless wiretapping, I have at times been accused of being soft on terrorism. Being accused of promoting censorship of progressive scholarship and advocacy is, however, a first. It is also untrue.

The policy that the Ford Foundation ultimately adopted requires that grant recipients not "promote or engage in violence, terrorism, bigotry or the destruction of any state." When did it become inappropriate for a private foundation, especially one with Ford's progressive track record, to refuse to fund those activities?

The government must be neutral toward different points of view. Private foundations, however, need not be. They exist to advance their own values. Sherman approvingly notes Ford's "commitment to human rights, poverty reduction and racial justice" and that in response to right-wing attacks, it "defiantly stepped up its funding of a wide range of antipoverty and social justice groups." Yet he seems to suggest that Ford's historic commitment to these values should not extend to combating anti-Semitism in the same way it has to combating racism, homophobia or other forms of bigotry. Thankfully, Ford has taken a different view.

Sherman's prediction that Ford would use its new grant language to limit free expression in some way other than by not subsidizing "violence, terrorism, bigotry or the destruction of any state" would be troubling if it had actually happened. In fact, Sherman was unable to cite a single case in which this has occurred.

In addition, Sherman strangely dismisses my concern that Ford and other foundations were at risk of hostile action by right-wing members of Congress. This was no idle threat. Conservatives have spent years attacking foundations, the arts, scholars, scientists and any other independent voice that might run afoul of their agenda. These battles have been chronicled in the pages of this publication and indeed in Sherman's article on Ford.

Make no mistake about it. In this particular case, some Senate Republicans saw a "perfect storm" gathering right before the 2004 election: a chance to work over the largest US progressive foundation and to exploit the issue to curry favor with Jewish voters. Senators Santorum and Grassley had already announced their desire to hold public hearings to begin the onslaught. By addressing the problem of bigotry among a small group of grantees, Ford both rededicated itself to its progressive mission and cut off the right-wing attack before it got off the ground.

Progressive foundations betray their mission when they support activities that promote violence, bigotry and terrorism. It is not just their right but their duty to insure that their funds go to organizations and initiatives that promote progressive values. Bigots are assured a steady stream of funding from the far right. They neither need nor deserve the support of the progressive community. JERROLD NADLER

Member of Congress, Eighth District, New York

Gloucester, Mass.

■ The Ford Foundation's policy of refusing funds to any organization that promotes the destruction of a state raises a hornet's nest of interesting questions: Will this hold true for an Ethiopian relief organization whose members advocate the reconquest of Eritrea, which won its independence from them only fifteen years ago? Would this have applied to any Eritrean organization before 1991 that advocated the former colony's independence then? What about grantees who advocated the dismantling of the Soviet Union? Or the former Yugoslavia? What about those that support independence for Quebec? Or Kurdistan?

Or are we really only talking about Israel?

DAN CONNELL

SHERMAN REPLIES

Brooklyn, NY

■ Marta Tellado seems to be implying that since most Ford grantees have not openly resisted the grant language imposed in 2004, then the language must be acceptable to them. But as I noted in my piece, most grantees are not in a position to challenge Ford. A handful of groups who felt they could stand up to the foundation did so.

It's true enough that certain Republicans have targeted liberal foundations in the past. But Nadler's account of the "perfect storm" of 2003 overlooks the fact that Senator Grassley is primarily interested in regulating—not "destroying"—the foundation sector. ("Destroy" is the word Nadler used during our interview.)

But the real issue here is the wording of Ford's grant-agreement letter—beginning with the word "promote." In one of their letters to Susan Berresford, Ethan Nadelmann and Ira Glasser of the Drug Policy Alliance noted that in recent years the government has "explicitly characterized the use of illicit drugs as promoting terrorism." They added: "The trouble with such ill-defined standards as 'promoting terrorism' or 'promoting bigotry' or 'promoting the destruction of any state' is that they inevitably embrace advocacy and speech. The rights of those who advocate for unpopular ideas and proposals are then at the mercy and discretion of those who interpret and enforce such vague and overbroad restrictions."

Similarly, with regard to the "destruction of any state" clause, this could have been interpreted, during the antiapartheid era, as prohibiting grants to groups affiliated with, or supporting, the African National Congress. Dan Connell cites a number of other examples. The university provosts wielded similar arguments against the Ford Foundation. SCOTT SHERMAN

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PRINTED MAY 31 VOLUME 282, NUMBER 24

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EDITORIALS

Enron Rules Still Apply

The verdict in Houston that convicted Enron's Kenneth Lay and Jeffrey Skilling of gargantuan fraud does not close the subject of corrupt corporations. But it might put a stop to the whining from boardrooms, for a while at least. The jury acted swiftly and with great clarity, brushing aside the "I didn't know" defense of the two executives in favor of guilty, guilty, guilty. Congratulations to the jurors and to the federal prosecutors.

The rapid meltdown of Enron in 2001 became the symbol of an era of financial deceit and eye-popping thievery. Executives like Skilling and Lay, claiming to embody the wonders of a "new economy," instead engineered the wholesale looting of shareholders and, not coincidentally, the destruction of the jobs and lives of bystanders, workers and communities. Families and institutional investors like pension funds lost $6 trillion in the collapse of the stock-market bubble. Scores of corporations were later compelled to "restate" illusory earnings.

How could all this have happened in a financial system that proclaims unrivaled "transparency" and a single-minded devotion to "shareholder value"? The Enron verdict ought to provoke new interest in that question. The short answer, of course, is the political capture of government by the plunderers. That's another reason to change party control in Congress but hardly a guarantee that anything will improve. Leading Democrats are also handmaidens of Wall Street firms and corporate titans.

The enduring scandal is the unfinished business of Enron-inspired reforms—large issues that both political parties danced away from in the aftermath. Indeed, until this verdict arrived, business groups were complaining that the very modest post-Enron reforms are too burdensome and must be rolled back. The looters may well succeed, if the public doesn't speak up sharply.

Authentic reform must first redress the imbalance of power within the governance of corporations—the permissive rules that enable top executives and financial insiders to do whatever they wish with the company, including destroy it. Proposals to permit pension funds and other major institutional investors to nominate independent directors will not produce revolutionary change but should help push managements toward longer-term business strategies. A management voice for employees, even if only advisory, would further enhance the quality of decision-making.

As it is, short-term greed still comes first, especially for CEOs. They're awarded not only fabulous salaries but also piles of stock options that give them a compelling incentive to pump up the stock price—fast—and then get out early, before hapless investors catch on and the share price collapses. If stock options are to continue, companies should be required to distribute them equitably to all within the company, with no more than 5 percent going to top managers. The once-fashionable proposition that incentive-based executive pay aligns top managers with the interests of the company and shareholders is not just bogus but destructive—witness the most recent scandal at Fannie Mae, where execs employed accounting tricks to produce staggering bonuses for themselves.

The other great challenge for reform is to act on what the Enron verdict teaches us: Crime in the corporate suites is committed by people, not by computers or abstract accounting principles. Stealing is stealing. The loose and forgiving standards embedded in corporate law and the criminal codes when applied to business and banking must be tightened and personalized so that individuals given enormous power over other people's money and lives are held personally accountable for their criminal behavior. Lawyers for Lay and Skilling pleaded that the two executives were being prosecuted because their company failed and that capitalism cannot flourish if managers are punished for "mistakes." The jury saw through that flimflam. So should the Congress.

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The Nation (ISSN 0027-8378) is published weekly (except for the second week in January, and biweekly the third week of July through the second week of September) by The Nation Company, L.P. © 2006 in the U.S.A. by The Nation Company, L.P., 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003. (212) 209-5400. Washington Bureau: Suite 308, 110 Maryland Avenue N.E., Washington, DC 20002. (202) 546-2239. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Subscription orders, changes of address and all subscription inquiries: The Nation, PO Box 55149, Boulder, CO 80322-5149, or call 1-800-333-8536. Publications Mail Agreement No: 40041477. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to Circulation Dept. or DPGM, 4960-2 Walker Road, Windsor, ON N9A 6J3. **When ordering a subscription, please allow 4-6 weeks for receipt of your first issue and for all subscription transactions.** Back issues $4 prepaid ($6 foreign) from: The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003. The Nation is available on microfilm from: University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Nation, PO Box 55149, Boulder, CO 80322-5149. Printed in U.S.A. on recycled paper.

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Why Haditha Matters

Enough details have emerged from survivors and military personnel to conclude that in the town of Haditha last November, members of the 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment perpetrated a massacre. The killings may have been in retaliation for the death of a Marine lance corporal, but this was not the work of soldiers gone berserk. The targets (children from 3 to 14, an old man in a wheelchair, taxi passengers), the hours-long duration of killings, the number of Marines involved, the careful mop-up—all amount to willful, targeted brutality designed to send a message to Iraqis. As Representative John Murtha has pointed out, the patently false story floated afterward, blaming the killings on roadside bombs, and Marine payoffs to survivors imply a cover-up that may extend far up the chain of command.

What matters about Haditha? After all, Iraq is a place where civilians die every day. Many of them die as a result of insurgent car bombs, or at the hands of Sunni or Shiite militias. Many thousands of others died in US air attacks early in the war (as civilians did recently in airstrikes in another US war zone, Kandahar).

Even in this context there remains a distinctly sickening horror in close-up systematic killing of civilians that's at odds with the declared US mission in Iraq and is repugnant to our national ideals. Even under intense battlefield conditions, troops can instigate atrocities, or they can resist them. In the My Lai massacre, in 1968, Hugh Thompson Jr., an American helicopter pilot, saved many lives by putting himself between the guns of Charlie Company and the villagers whom those behind the guns—led by their officers—were wantonly killing. A generation of future US military officers were taught the details of the My Lai massacre as a particular lesson: What makes war crimes is criminal leadership. Whatever the responsibility of the unit commanders in Haditha, it is George W. Bush as Commander in Chief who has sent the clear message that human rights abuses and violations of international law are justified in the "war on terror."

That the Marines institutionally covered up Haditha until *Time* magazine raised questions with the Corps suggests that the moral damage from the Iraq War is broader than a single debased unit. That is what so powerfully motivates Murtha, a Marine and Vietnam veteran. Another Marine, Senator John Warner, is promising hearings, but his Armed Services Committee's toothless investigation of Abu Ghraib offers scant hope of serious inquiry. As with My Lai a generation ago, it is participants in the Haditha killings or cover-up—some haunted by what they saw or heard about—who are bringing details to the press.

What happened in Haditha and how it was covered up is only half the story. The rest is yet to unfold: whether Haditha kindles a long-overdue reckoning with the moral catastrophe of this war or the shock gets defused by low-level Congressional inquiries; whether Haditha turns out to have been the low point of the US military venture in Iraq or a foreshadowing of worse to come. What we need is not the "picture of what happened" promised by the White House but a full-scale investigation both of the massacre in Haditha and of the climate of impunity that allowed it to happen and to be ignored for so long.

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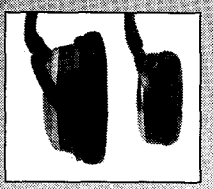

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COMMENT

Cellmates' Reunion

Barbara Garson

"*Dear Cellmates,*" (said the postcard) "*I need to go back to jail but I don't know what crime to commit. Could we get together and brainstorm? Marjorie*"

Marjorie, Susan and I had been cellmates for ten days in 1967. Our crime was trespassing at a draft board during the Vietnam War. After college Susan and I had each moved to the city where we still get together regularly. But neither of us had seen Marjorie for almost forty years.

When she showed up at Susan's house she was still brown-haired and straight-spined, but her hands quivered. It was a symptom of a disease that would soon make her an invalid, she explained, and the best care she could get was in prison.

"Oh Marge, you can stay with me—for a while." Remembering my husband, I had to add the qualification. Susan offered shelter too. But Marjorie hadn't turned to her old gang for nursing care.

"I need long-term professional help," she said, "and there's no way I can pay for it." However, she explained—"and this is why I got you girls together"—thanks to the "war on drugs" and get-tough sentencing, the jails were full of aging third strikers. The particular prison Marjorie hoped to get into spent more than $70,000 a year per senior and had a better patient-to-staff ratio than any nursing home that would accept her Medicare.

"So I move the agenda," Marjorie declared. "Let's plan a caper that will get me sent away for life."

"Sell pot," Susan suggested. "Thirty years should be good enough."

But Marjorie abhorred drugs. All three of us did, even in the 1960s.

"Burn the flag," again from Susan.

"But I'm not anti-American."

That was true too. In the old days we always moved our BRING THEM HOME banner far away from the doofus (or was he an FBI agent?) waving the Vietnamese flag. We weren't about to cede the US flag to the creeps running the current war. Besides, flag-burning laws might be unconstitutional. The last thing Marjorie needed was years on the outside while her case made its way up to the Supreme Court.

"Come on," Marjorie scolded. "We shut down that draft board for over six hours just trespassing. Now I'm willing to be sent away for life."

But we couldn't come up with anything. The meeting petered out. Susan and I promised to continue brainstorming and we did indeed keep meeting, but our focus shifted to getting Marjorie long-term care outside prison.

I called a doctor who used to volunteer at a Black Panther clinic. He explained that left-wing doctors could rarely afford their own malpractice insurance these days. He was covered through the county clinic where he worked. But he couldn't choose his own patients, and he certainly couldn't sneak an unauthorized old lady into a nursing home. He put us in touch with a geriatric social worker who showed us a couple of institutions for which Marjorie might be a "candidate," if strings were pulled. They were so dismal that we went back to thinking of crimes.

We'd just about given up when we saw the headline:

PALSIED GRANNY PIES PREZ

You probably read, yourself, about the pie-toting old lady who parachuted onto the offshore oil rig from which George W. Bush delivered his latest "we're winning" speech. That was Marjorie. Her quiver was apparently worsening, because she accidentally spattered Condoleezza Rice with some banana cream filling.

But from her point of view, the caper was a total success. True, the ACLU at first argued that pie-in-the-face isn't terrorism. But she'd unquestionably violated the portable no-fly zone that hovers over the President wherever he goes. That guaranteed her a life sentence.

Two months later Susan and I visited Marjorie in the senior wing of a modern prison. The first thing we noticed was that there was no urine smell. There were no guns or locks either.

And the guards were reasonably pleasant because they felt they'd gotten the easy inmates.

But the thing Marjorie particularly appreciated was the frequent visits from younger prisoners with time on their hands. In prison she'd found the physical help she needed without the isolation of a nursing home.

Marjorie's roommate was a 91-year-old who'd been arrested for selling half her prescribed OxyContin to addicts for $10 a pill. She'd been reputed to be a mean old woman, but she was good company now that she didn't have to choose between heat and pain relief.

"Marge really did her research," I said on the way out.

"But what about us in twenty years?" Susan asked.

"Or ten," I sighed. "We didn't do a very good job reforming this country, did we?"

"We were too busy fighting war and segregation," Susan answered. "We thought the Democrats could handle healthcare."

I'm not going to tell you the name of Marjorie's prison; we wouldn't want to ruin a good thing. But Susan and I have begun thinking of a crime we could commit in the same jurisdiction—something that makes a strong political statement but preferably nonviolent. Do you have any suggestions?

Barbara Garson is the author of MacBird! *and the new play* Security.

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COMMENT

All DeLay's Children

If the toothless lobbying "reform" bill approved by the House and Senate is any indication, we haven't seen the last of the likes of Jack Abramoff or Tom DeLay. DeLay exits Congress June 9, but his influence lives on. His former deputy, Dennis Hastert, remains Speaker of the House. His key liaison to lobbyists on K Street, Roy Blunt, is majority whip. Even John Boehner, a rival from the Gingrich years, retained three DeLay staffers when he became majority leader. More important, the Hammer left many nails behind among the lower tier of House GOP leadership members, committee chairmen, party spokesmen and fundraisers he propelled to power. These are the people who will shape the GOP's agenda for years to come. Here are five disciples who are carrying on DeLay's legacy.

§ **Eric Cantor** (age 43). A fast-rising third-term Congressman, Cantor distinguished himself as DeLay's "chief defender," according to *Roll Call*. He was appointed chief deputy majority whip—the fourth most powerful position in the House—at the ripe age of 39. Cantor became the youngest member of the House leadership after a DeLay staffer recommended he be named Blunt's deputy over a host of older and more qualified candidates. Thus, when DeLay's ethical problems piled up in 2004 and '05, the Virginian held countless press conferences and strategy sessions with conservative activists to protect his leader.

As the only Jewish Republican in the House, Cantor provides a crucial link between pro-Israel donors and Christian conservatives. Through his seat on the powerful Ways and Means Committee, which oversees tax law and Social Security, Cantor raised more money for his colleagues than any other House Republican in the last election cycle. Like DeLay, Cantor is also tied to Abramoff, having accepted $13,000 from the disgraced lobbyist's Indian clients, written letters on behalf of tribes and held eight events at Abramoff's restaurant, Signatures. Cantor even had a sandwich named after him at Abramoff's deli, Stacks: the Eric Cantor, a "tuna-based stacker," changed by Cantor to roast beef on challah.

§ **Jack Kingston** (age 51). As vice chairman of the Republican Conference Committee and the number-six House Republican, Georgia's Kingston sculpts the GOP's message, producing talking points for fellow members and soundbites for conservative media. *National Journal* rated him the most conservative Congressman in 2004. But unlike DeLay, Kingston is an affable, smooth Southerner who jokes with Stephen Colbert and Bill Maher. Kingston's relentless defense of DeLay at times merited its own comedy show. When the TV series *Law & Order* referred to DeLay negatively in one episode, Kingston accused the show of associating his boss with a "racist, anti-Semitic judge killer." After Representative Chris Bell filed an ethics complaint against DeLay resulting in an unprecedented three rebukes, Kingston called it a "nonstory." When DeLay received two indictments in Texas on money-laundering charges, Kingston circulated a glossy brochure titled "The 'Hammer' Has a Big Heart," boasting of DeLay's "affections for his bichons frisés, Baily and Taylor, and his miniature dachshund, Scooter," reported the *Washington Post*. Describing how DeLay maintained his resilience, Kingston said, "he knows Jesus personally."

§ **Patrick McHenry** (age 30). The youngest member of the 109th Congress, McHenry is the "it" boy of the GOP establishment. DeLay recently named McHenry one of his potential successors, an endorsement the freshman accepted enthusiastically. "I'm blown away," McHenry told the *Washington Times*. "I'm so excited that Tom DeLay would say that about me"—a fitting compliment to a pupil who's earned a reputation as the party's "attack-dog-in-training." DeLay was the first Washington pol to contact McHenry after he won the Republican primary in North Carolina's rural 10th Congressional district, promptly sending his campaign $10,000. Upon election, DeLay shepherded McHenry through Washington, with cushy seats on the Budget and Financial Services committees, a communications position within the GOP's fundraising arm and a role in Blunt's whip operation. McHenry returned the favors by attacking House minority leader Nancy Pelosi for alleged travel violations and by voting, along with just nineteen other Republicans, to rewrite House ethics rules permanently to insulate DeLay. McHenry's clearly a quick learner: He's hired Grover Norquist's press secretary and dated a former assistant of Karl Rove.

§ **Richard Pombo** (age 45). With his cowboy hats and ostrich-skin boots, Pombo fancies himself a "Capitol Cowboy." To government watchdogs, he's "Dirty Dick," a militant anti-environmentalist and Abramoff crony. The California rancher has raised hundreds of thousands from big business for fellow Republicans and enjoyed close ties with recently indicted DeLay staffer Tony Rudy. Pombo and fellow DeLay protégé John Doolittle (himself a top Republican under investigation for assisting Abramoff) helped kill a government investigation into a Houston-based DeLay donor responsible for a $1.6 billion savings-and-loan scandal in Texas. At the same time Pombo's staff was cultivating ties to Abramoff, DeLay helped Pombo leapfrog ahead of six more-senior Republicans to become chairman of the House Resources Committee, which has jurisdiction over Indian gaming. At age 42, Pombo was the youngest chairman in the House. "This is the guy DeLay wanted," former House Ethics Committee chair Joel Hefley remarked. Pombo has used

CALVIN TRILLIN

Bush Is Asked Again If He Can Recall Any Mistakes

Mistakes? Bush now admits that "bring 'em on"
Was not too shrewd. He said so quite contritely.
Such cowboy talk, he says, he'll use no more.
He'll still start wars, of course, but more politely.

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LOS MOJADOS (1952) **LARRY BENDOSK**

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COMMENT

the position to try to destroy the Endangered Species Act, reward big-donor polluters, ignore calls for an investigation into Abramoff's tribal clients, give his chief of staff two salaries and pay his wife and brother $357,000 over the past four years for "consulting" work. More recently, Pombo has come under fire for renting an RV for a family vacation and sticking taxpayers with the bill.

§ **Tom Reynolds** (age 55). As head of the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC), Reynolds breakfasts with Karl Rove and lunches with Dick Cheney. When Reynolds inherited the upstate New York seat of DeLay ally Bill Paxon (now a top K Street lobbyist), DeLay said he "made sure [Reynolds] had every opportunity presented to him to exploit his abilities." Reynolds became the only freshman to become a deputy on DeLay's whip team and only the second newcomer ever named to the House Rules Committee, which controls House debate. In 2001 DeLay personally persuaded New York Republicans to draw Reynolds a more Republican district. With DeLay's backing, Reynolds became a player on the Ways and Means Committee, cultivating a plum fundraising base, and chair of the NRCC, helping to expand the GOP majority in 2004. He emulated DeLay's fundraising prowess—coming up with $1 million for House Republicans in the last election—and replicated his lavish lifestyle. In the past three years, Reynolds has taken more lobbyist-funded trips than return visits to his district. Small wonder that Reynolds calls DeLay "a darn good mentor of mine." He's frequently mentioned as a possible future Speaker of the House.

Of course, recent polls indicate that the House DeLay built might yet collapse. If Republicans lose their majority in November, or a significant number of seats, a major shake-up could derail the careers of quite a few DeLay disciples. The guilt is only likely to accumulate. Two of DeLay's top aides have already been indicted in the Abramoff investigation. Reports suggest that DeLay's key spiritual adviser and lobbyist, Ed Buckham, along with another former protégé, Ohio Representative Bob Ney, are in the cross-hairs of the law. And ABC News claims that Dennis Hastert is "in the mix." DeLay himself faces trial in Texas and remains a target in the Abramoff probe. As his disciples are learning, it's no longer a good day to be a comrade of DeLay. ARI BERMAN

Ari Berman, a Nation *contributing writer based in Washington, DC, is a Nation Institute Puffin Foundation writing fellow.*

'Tester Time' in Montana

With his flat-top haircut and a left hand that lost three finger tips to an adolescent run-in with a meat grinder, family farmer Jon Tester won't fit everyone's image of a US senator. But the straight-talking president of the Montana Senate offers the Democratic Party one of its best prospects for grabbing a Republican-held seat and perhaps reclaiming control of the Senate. Indeed, Tester's country style and populist politics make him the perfect antidote to the culture of corruption exemplified by the man he wants to retire in November, Conrad Burns, whose ties to the Jack Abramoff lobbying scandal have made him one of the most vulnerable Republican senators. They could also make Tester one of the most exciting additions to the Senate since the arrival of a similarly unconventional fellow named Paul Wellstone.

To get to Washington, Tester first must win a June 6 Democratic primary that pits him against Montana auditor John Morrison, the scion of a politically prominent family whose cautious approach to issues like the war in Iraq and healthcare reform have made him a favorite of the conservative Democratic Leadership Council. Where Morrison pulls his punches, Tester throws them. On the war, Tester says, "The time has come to support our troops by laying out a plan to bring them home." A skeptic about free-trade deals and an enthusiast for biofuel energy alternatives that have the potential to ease dependence on foreign oil while providing reliable markets for US farmers, Tester is determined to shift federal policy to meet the economic and social needs of neglected rural communities in an agricultural state that in 2004 elected Democratic rancher Brian Schweitzer as its governor.

Tester is one of the architects of Montana's Democratic renaissance; after winning a seat representing a county that votes Republican two to one in presidential elections, he helped engineer his party's takeover of the Senate two years ago and then steered the chamber's activist agenda on healthcare, education and rural development. At 49, he farms the land his grandfather homesteaded in 1916, taking time from the primary campaign for spring planting on a 2,000-acre spread he's converting to organic. In the Senate he'd give Democrats something they desperately need: a progressive farmer, fresh from rural America, who speaks the language of a red region that should be blue. Says former Montana Senator John Melcher, a keeper of the state's rural populist tradition: "Jon Tester is Montana from the ground up."

With Morrison facing a nasty scandal that makes it tough for him to attack Burns's ethics—newspapers charge that the auditor went easy on the securities-fraud investigation of a man who married a woman with whom Morrison had an extramarital affair—Montanans like Melcher say it's "Tester Time." Democrats in Washington ought to hope they're right. JOHN NICHOLS

NATION NOTES

Herman Schwartz was named by Alliance for Justice as its 2006 Champion of Justice. Schwartz, a frequent contributor to our pages, was lauded for working tirelessly "to promote social justice throughout his career, from serving as a mediator in the 1971 Attica uprising to writing new constitutions for nations of the former Soviet bloc. Professor Schwartz is also an expert on the limits of electronic surveillance."

* * *

ON THE WEB: In a CUNY commencement address, Victor Navasky invites newly minted PhDs to energize the national conversation and persuade a disengaged public to return to politics. Richard Lingeman reviews Edward Sorel's *Literary Lives*, in which Sorel reveals all and then some about Tolstoy, Sartre, Ayn Rand, Norman Mailer and others—all in comic-strip frames (www.thenation.com).

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

Palestine: It's All Over

The first item I ever wrote about Palestinians was around 1973, when I was just starting a press column for the *Village Voice*. It concerned a story in the *New York Times* about a "retaliatory" raid by the Israeli air force, after a couple of Fatah guerrillas had fired on an IDF unit. I'm not sure whether there were any fatalities. The planes flew north and dumped high explosives on a refugee camp in Lebanon, killing a dozen or so.

I wrote a little commentary, noting the usual lack of moral disquiet in the *Times* story about this lethal retaliation inflicted on innocent refugees. Dan Wolf, the *Voice*'s editor, called me in and suggested I might want to reconsider. I think, that first time, the item got dropped. But Dan's unwonted act of censorship riled me, and I started writing a fair amount about the lot of the Palestinians.

Those were the days when Palestinians carried far less news value for editors than Furbish's lousewort, and no politician ever said that this beleaguered plant didn't actually exist as a species, which is what Golda Meir said of Palestinians.

Back then you had to dig a little harder to excavate what Israelis were actually doing to Palestinians. Lay out the facts about institutionalized racism, land confiscations, torture, and a hail of abuse would pour through the mailbox, as when I published a long interview in the *Voice* in 1980 with the late Israel Shahak, the intrepid professor from Hebrew University.

It's slightly eerie now to look at what Shahak was saying back then and at the accuracy of his predictions: "The basic trends were established in '74 and '75, including settler organization, mystical ideology, and the great financial support of the United States to Israel.... Between summer '74 and summer '75 the key decisions were taken, and from that time it's a straight line." Among these decisions, said Shahak, was "to keep the occupied territories of Palestine," a detailed development of much older designs consummated in 1967.

Gradually, through the 1980s, very often in the translations from the Hebrew-language press that Shahak used to send, the contours of the Israeli plan emerged, like the keel and ribs and timbers of an old ship: the road system that would bypass Palestinian towns and villages and link the Jewish settlements and military posts; the ever-expanding clusters of illegal settlements; control of the whole region's water.

It wasn't hard to get vivid descriptions of the increasingly intolerable conditions of life for Palestinians: the torture of prisoners, the barriers to the simplest trip, the harassment of farmers and schoolchildren, the house demolitions. Plenty of people came back from Israel and the territories with harrowing accounts, though few of the accounts made the journey into a major newspaper or onto national television.

And even in the testimonies that did get published here, there was never recognition of Israel's long-term plan to wipe the record clean of all troublesome UN resolutions, crush Palestinians' national aspirations, steal their land and water, cram them into ever-smaller enclaves, ultimately balkanize them with the wall, which was on the drawing boards many years ago. Indeed, to write about any sort of master plan was to incur further torrents of abuse for one's supposedly "paranoid" fantasies about Israel's bad faith, with much pious invocation of the "peace process."

But successive Israeli governments did have a long-term plan. No matter who was in power, the roads got built, the water stolen, the olive and fruit trees cut down (a million), the houses knocked over (12,000), the settlements imposed (300), the shameless protestations of good faith issued to the US press (beyond computation).

As the new millennium shambled forward, surely it became impossible to believe any Israeli claim to be bargaining, or even to wish to bargain, in good faith. By now the "facts on the ground" in Israel were as sharply in focus as one of Dali's Surrealist paintings.

In May of this year the Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, came to Washington and addressed a joint session of Congress at which he declared: "I believed, and to this day still believe, in our people's eternal and historic right to this entire land." In other words, he doesn't recognize the right of Palestinians to even the wretched cantons currently envisaged in his "realignment." Why should Hamas believe a syllable of Olmert's poppycock?

In Olmert's "realignment" plan the "separation barrier," now scheduled to be Israel's permanent "demographic border," annexes 10 percent of the West Bank, while melding into Israel vast settlements and hundreds of thousands of settlers. The Palestinians lose their best agricultural land and the water. Israel's Greater Jerusalem finishes off any possible viability for a separate Palestinian state. This Palestinian mini-archipelago of cantons is shuttered to the east by Israel's security border in the Jordan Valley.

The press here, marinated in timidity and ignorance, greets Olmert's "realignment" schedule with tranquil respect. In the meantime a frightful historical tragedy is in its final stages. With the connivance of what is sometimes laughably referred to as the "world community"—notably the United States and the European Union—Israel is deliberately starving Palestinians into submission as the reward for having democratically elected the party of their choice. Whole communities are famished and sick, cut off by Israel from food and medicine. The World Bank predicts a poverty rate of more than 67 percent later this year. A UN report issued in Geneva on May 30 says that four out of ten Palestinians in the territories live under the official poverty line, of less than $2.10 a day. The ILO estimates the jobless rate to be 40.7 percent of the Palestinian labor force.

The end of the story? I'd say the basic strategy is what it was in 1948: population transfer, to be achieved by making life so awful for Palestinians that most of them will depart, leaving a few bankrupt ghettoes behind as memorials to all those foolish hopes of a sovereign Palestinian state. ■

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VOICES OF A NEW *MOVIMIENTO*

ROBERTO LOVATO

Under cover of an oak tree on a tobacco farm deep in the heart of rural North Carolina, Leticia Zavala challenges the taller, older male migrant farm workers with talk of a boycott and *legalización*.

"We will not get anything without fighting for it," declares the intense 5-foot-1 organizer with the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC). Pen and notebook in hand, Zavala hacks swiftly through the fear and doubt that envelop many migrants. She speaks from a place, an experience, that most organizers in this country don't know: Her earliest childhood and adolescent memories are of migrating each year with her family between Mexico and Florida. "We have five buses and each of you has to decide for yourselves if you want to go to Washington with us," she says. After some deliberation most of the workers, many of whom have just finished the seven-day trek from Nayarit, Mexico, opt to get on another bus and join the May 1 *marcha* and boycott. They trust her, as do the more than 500 other migrant workers from across the state who heed the call from one of the new leaders of the *movimiento* that is upon us.

Asked why she thinks FLOC was so successful in mobilizing farm workers (the union made history after a stunning 2004 victory that secured representation and a contract for more than 10,000 H-2A "guest" workers who labor on strawberry, tobacco, yam, cucumber and other farms), Zavala talks about "the importance of networks" and the need to respond to the globalization of labor through the creation of a "migrating union." She and other FLOC organizers have followed migrant workers to Mexico, where the organization has an office—and then have followed them back over several months. She also points to the vision, strategies and tactics shared by her mentor, FLOC founder Baldemar Velásquez, who passed on to her the advice that Martin Luther King Jr. gave him during the Poor People's Campaign in 1967: "When you impact the rich man's ability to make money, anything is negotiable."

But when you ask her what is most important in the twenty-first-century matrix of successful organizing, the bespectacled, bright-eyed Zavala will bring you back to basics: "One of the biggest successes of the union is that it takes away loneliness."

The 26-year-old Zavala's vision, experience and learning are a telling reflection of how the leaders of the *movimiento* merge traditional labor and civil rights strategies and tactics with more global, networked—and personalized—organizing to meet the challenges of the quintessentially global issue of immigration. While it's important to situate the immigrant struggle within the context of the ongoing freedom struggles of African-Americans, women (like Zavala, an extraordinary number of *movimiento* leaders are *mujeres*) and others who have fought for social justice in the United States, labeling and framing it as a "new civil rights movement" risks erasing its roots in Latin American struggles and history.

The mainstream narrative of the movement emphasizes that single-minded immigrants want legalization—and how "angry Hispanics" and their Spanish-language radio DJ leaders mobilized in reaction to HR 4437 (better known as the Sensenbrenner immigration bill, which would criminalize the undocumented). But Zavala and other *movimiento* leaders across the country say that while it's true that the Sensenbrenner bill provided a spark, explaining this powerful movement of national and even global significance as a reaction to DJ-led calls to "*marchar!*" leaves many things—and people—out of the picture.

This time, there is no Martin Luther King or César Chávez centering and centralizing the movement. Instead, grassroots leaders like Zavala mix, scratch and dub different media (think MySpace.com and text messaging, radio and TV, butcher paper and bullhorns) while navigating the cultural, political and historical currents that yoke and inspire the diverse elements making up this young, decentralized, digital-age *movimiento*.

At the older end of the age and experience spectrum (the average Latino is 26) is 44-year-old Juan José Gutiérrez. He started organizing in the late 1970s, distributing mimeographed copies of the radical newspaper *Sin Fronteras* to immigrant

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Margaret Cho is a longstanding **Nation** *reader.*

(Legally speaking, of course, everything has an owner, but as a *Nation* editor once wrote, "it is one of the superb facts about *The Nation* that you can no more 'own' it than you can own the spirit it represents.")

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workers in the face of hostility from the anti-Communist right. The director of Latino Movement USA and a key figure in the recent (and, to some, controversial) May 1 boycott, Gutiérrez has logged thousands of miles and met hundreds of leaders in his efforts to build one of many vibrant movement networks. "Since January, I've been to about thirty-five different cities and seen old and new leadership coming together to create something that has never been seen before," says Gutiérrez, who migrated to Los Angeles from Tuxpan, Jalisco, Mexico, when he was 11. "The [Spanish-language] DJs played a role, an important role, but they let us put our message in their medium. You can trace this movement all the way back to 1968."

Unlike the *movimiento* leaders who cut their teeth organizing in left-leaning Latin America, Gutiérrez traces his political roots to post–civil rights East LA; he and many of the most important Mexican and Chicano immigrant rights leaders in LA—including union leader Maria Elena Durazo, longtime activist Javier Rodriguez and LA Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa—came out of the Centro de Acción Social Autónomo (Center for Autonomous Social Action), or CASA, a seminal Chicano political organization founded by legendary leaders Bert Corona and Soledad "Chole" Alatorre in 1968. One of the central tasks of CASA, which from its inception had a strong working-class and trade union orientation, was organizing undocumented workers. Gutiérrez and others who have covered the country spiderlike for years see a direct line from the organizing around the amnesty law of 1986, which legalized 3 million undocumented workers, to immigrant rights organizing in California (home to one of every three immigrants in the United States), the fight against Proposition 187 of 1994 (which tried to deny health and education benefits to the children of the undocumented) and the historic shift of the AFL-CIO in 2000, when it decided to undertake immigrant organizing.

While some movimiento *leaders cut their teeth in left-leaning Latin America, others trace their roots to post–civil rights East LA.*

Having hopped back and forth among many of the more than 200 cities and towns that staged actions in April and May, Gutiérrez sees different kinds of leaders emerging from the grassroots: "There are, of course, the undocumented, who are also leading things in local communities; there are legal immigrants getting involved, because they have friends and family who are affected by the anti-immigrant policies; and there are immigrants from different countries who bring their own political, sometimes radical, experiences from places like Guatemala and El Salvador."

One of the "radical" legacies that New York immigrant rights leader Miguel Ramírez has carried with him since fleeing El Salvador is an intensely collective outlook on personal and political identity. Ramírez, who heads the Queens-based Centro Hispano Cuzcatlán, recalls how one of his US-born colleagues told him to "correct" the résumé he used to apply for his first organizing job in New York. "He [the friend] told me I had to take out the 'we,'" says 53-year-old Ramírez, whose bushy mustache often lifts to reveal a disarming smile. "I didn't know it was wrong to write, 'We organized a forum, we organized a workshop, we organized a network.'"

The experience and approach of Ramírez, who left his homeland in 1979 after many of his fellow students at the University of El Salvador were persecuted and killed, show that the US *movimiento* is as much the northernmost expression of a resurgent Latin American left as it is a new, more globalized, human rights–centered continuation of the Chicano, civil rights and other previous struggles that facilitated immigrant rights work here.

Ramírez, who estimates that since migrating he's helped organize more than 100 marches—all of them "very disciplined and without incidents"—is informed by the experience of organizing students, campesinos and others in revolutionary El Salvador, where one of every three Salvadorans adopted radicalized politics during the war. Lacking the wealth and pro–US government politics of Cuban-Americans and other, more conservative immigrant groups, Ramírez and many Salvadoran immigrants (most of whom were denied legal status and benefits granted to Cubans, Vietnamese and others) created organizations that then formed vast multi-issue, mass-based networks challenging the foreign and domestic policies of the most powerful country on earth.

This robust legacy energizes Ramírez and Centro Hispano Cuzcatlán, which organizes around worker rights, housing and immigration, as they play definitive roles in the construction of local networks like the Immigrant Communities in Action coalition. Through the coalition, Centro joined Indian, Pakistani, Korean, Filipino, Bangladeshi, Indonesian and other groups that have organized some of the country's most diverse marches.

Reflecting the historic and ongoing tensions between more election- and legislative-focused immigrant rights advocates in Washington and local and regional players, Ramírez, like the younger Zavala, calmly insists the *movimiento* must look beyond the upcoming elections and even the pending immigration bill. "In the end, it's an issue of power, one that can only be addressed by constant organizing."

US-born Latinos also feel Ramírez's urgency about organizing around immigration. Their ranks include teens and twenty-somethings relatively new to politics, along with veterans like Wisconsin's Christine Neumann-Ortiz, who was influenced by several Latin American movements as well as the struggle against California's Proposition 187.

"To see those thousands of people marching against Prop 187 was an inspiration," says Ortiz, who heads Voces de la Frontera, an immigrant worker center in the belly of the anti-immigrant beast, James Sensenbrenner's Milwaukee. "I was very impressed that there was that kind of response [to Prop 187]. We used that as a lesson," says Ortiz, who was one of the main organizers of marches of 30,000 and 70,000 people,

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some of the largest marches ever in a state with a storied progressive past.

Ortiz was not caught off guard by the *movimiento*. "I'm happy to be alive to see this shift," she states from one of Voces's three offices in Wisconsin, "but I'm not at all surprised. We've been building up networks of people over many years."

She and other activists point to years of service and advocacy on behalf of immigrants, which built up good will and trust in the community, as being defining factors in the ability to rally people into political action.

Founded in Austin, Texas, with a mission to build solidarity between US and Mexican maquiladora workers following the signing of the NAFTA accords in nearby San Antonio in 1994, Voces de la Frontera embodies a local-global sensibility. Ortiz started the Milwaukee Voces in November 2001 in response to the growing needs of Milwaukee's fast-growing Latino immigrant population. Like the settlement houses and mutual aid societies and other organizations that supported German and other white European immigrant workers of previous, more progressive eras in Wisconsin and elsewhere, Voces provides a critical support structure for the mostly Mexican and Central American workers in the agricultural, hotel and restaurant, construction and manufacturing industries in HR 4437 country.

Sensenbrenner "wants to leave a legacy. So did McCarthy. Immigrants in Wisconsin know his hypocrisy better than anyone," says Ortiz, whose German and Mexican immigrant heritage portends the not-so-distant future of once wholly white Wisconsin. "He is encroaching on his own base. Dairy farmers in his own district are revolting because he's attacking their economic base. This can't last in the long term," she says, as if eyeing developments in post–Prop 187 California, where short-term anti-immigrant backlash led to a longer-term movement that gave Los Angeles its first Latino (and progressive) mayor—and gave the *movimiento* a vision of its potential.

Like organizers in Los Angeles, Chicago and other cities, Ortiz and Voces have built strong and deep relationships with the local Spanish-language media. But they're also keenly aware of who's leading the charge. "We had lists of more than 4,000 workers before the radio stations or Sensenbrenner came into the picture," Ortiz explains.

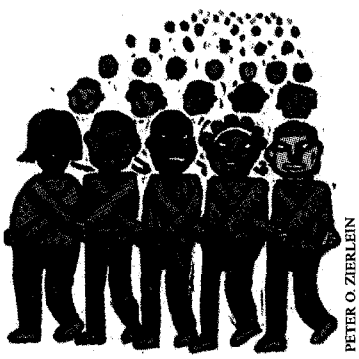
As they continue to organize and lobby around the immigration debate in Congress, around the inevitable backlash at the local and state levels and around a more proactive agenda, Ortiz and many of the other leaders of the immigrant rights movement are keeping their eyes on a larger prize, beyond the issue of immigration. "We're going to change this country," she says, adding, "We've gained public sympathy for immigrants. We've gained recognition and power, and we are an inspiration to the larger movement for change." She is especially motivated when she describes the effect of the *movimiento* on the generations to come. Like the "Hmong students who went to a Sensenbrenner town hall meeting in South Alice [a Milwaukee suburb] and chanted 'Si se puede, Si se puede' at him." Asked if the backlash will damage the *movimiento*, Ortiz responds, "In the long run this will make us stronger and build our movement." ■

WHAT'S THE ANTIDOTE TO BLACK-IMMIGRANT TENSIONS? GOOD ORGANIZING.

A Bronx Tale

MICHELLE GARCÍA

The years have been hard on the South Bronx. But there was a time, before the banks disinvested, exposing homes to the arsonist's torch, before crack and AIDS devastated whole families, that kids in the South Bronx knew better than to think that misdeeds would go unreported to their mothers. Back then, family meant the neighborhood and the neighborhood meant community, remembers Cerita Parker. That principle compels Parker—as a black woman, a community organizer and a mother—to champion immigrant rights.



PETER O. ZIERLEIN

Wearing dark glasses and long braids, Parker shares the message of her mission inside the storefront office of Mothers on the Move (MOM), the grassroots group to which she belongs. She explains to new members, and reminds a few veterans of the South Bronx group, why immigration belongs on their organizing agenda alongside environmental justice, housing and education.

"How can we close our eyes to our neighbors?" asks Parker, referring to undocumented immigrants. "It's just another device to divide and conquer. They want us to compete for the very basic things. No one is talking about the bigger picture."

Parker speaks about reports of discord between African-Americans and undocumented immigrants, primarily from Mexico and Central America. Despite the arguments that illegal immigration diminishes wages and jeopardizes the blue-collar jobs typically filled by blacks, MOM is intent on seizing on the momentum created by the immigrant mobilizations to grow its *familia*.

When the House approved the Sensenbrenner bill (HR 4437), which proposes to criminalize immigrants and anyone who helps or works with them, MOM took it as a threat to its efforts to organize the community. The group responded to the call for a national boycott on May 1 by shutting the gate to its store-

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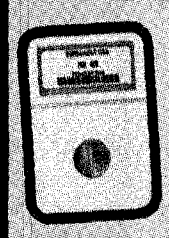

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A Shared Vision

When it comes to immigration issues, it's useful to keep in mind that the United States of America was born as a white supremacist state. Although the ideology of white supremacy was not officially stipulated, it was an implicit assumption, made explicit by the pitiless genocide of the indigenous population and the ruthless kidnapping of enslaved Africans. The nation's first Naturalization Act, of 1790, made it official by restricting American citizenship exclusively to "free white persons." That legislation codified the disenfranchisement of the growing population of enslaved Africans and allowed the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, which made *illegal aliens* of slaves who escaped from so-called "slave states."

It also allowed this fledgling nation to deport thousands of Chinese immigrants who had been imported to build the transcontinental railway. After the coast-to-coast system was completed, in 1869, Chinese labor was no longer needed. This set a pattern that has since become well worn: The media began the process of dehumanizing the Chinese as opium-smoking purveyors of alien evils; they became the "yellow peril"; and in 1882 Congress easily passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, forbidding further immigration from China.

This pattern, repeated throughout US history, makes clear that laws of citizenship ratified and reinforced white supremacy. Asians were the most consistent targets, but other non-Europeans also felt the sting of xenophobic immigration policies—including those Eastern and Southern Europeans once deemed nonwhite. The House's Sensenbrenner bill—HR 4437, or the Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005, named for Republican James Sensenbrenner of Wisconsin—is just the latest iteration of this pattern.

These occasional flare-ups of anti-immigrant discourse historically leave African-Americans ambivalent. Earlier spurts of (primarily European) immigration dampened their job prospects, and many black leaders openly expressed their opposition to unchecked immigration. The link between European immigration and black unemployment was crystallized when World War I shut off the flow of immigrant labor. In one of this nation's largest internal migrations, hundreds of thousands of African-Americans left the rural South for the industrial North to fill those jobs.

But African-Americans also felt empathy for those darker-skinned immigrants, who were victims of colonial domination in their home countries and fellow targets of discrimination in the United States. That ambivalence is apparent in this latest immigration ruckus, which is focused primarily on Latinos. Most African-Americans in leadership positions express support for the goals of immigration activists, and several national polls show that black citizens back liberal immigration measures more readily than other groups.

There is, however, considerable opposition to such measures within the black community. This antagonism is based largely on issues of employment and on fears that immigration issues and Latino concerns will suspend efforts to redress the legacy of slavery. For example, a Pew Hispanic poll released in March found that 41 percent of African-American respondents in Chicago said they had lost a job to an immigrant compared with 15 percent of white, non-Hispanic residents. Some labor researchers have found that employers would rather hire illegal immigrants, because they will accept lower wages in cash, and have little power to redress abuses.

With a crisis of unemployment and incarceration afflicting black communities across the nation, some activists argue that more immigrants (legal or illegal) worsen the situation. Ex-offenders and inner-city victims of chronic education failures are particularly vulnerable, they argue. Much of the black opposition to liberal immigration policies is emerging from this segment of the community. In Chicago, for example, a group called Voice of the Ex-offender (VOTE) is leading the opposition to the immigration movement.

Those concerns are real, and leaders of the new movement would do well to incorporate the unfinished racial business into their agenda. Efforts to educate Latinos about the context of the black freedom struggle should be a high priority for immigration activists. If handled astutely, activists can use the energy of the immigration movement to help lift other civil rights issues off the back burner.

The new black leadership rising from the rubble of the incarceration crisis should understand that restricted immigration would do little to solve the African-American community's long-term employment problems. In fact, focusing on undocumented immigrants as a cause of unemployment of unskilled black workers is a bit of a distraction. Black unemployment rates in cities like Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Pittsburgh and Memphis, where immigrant labor is a relatively small factor, are just as high as elsewhere. It seems clear that the primary barriers to black employment remain racial discrimination, the decline of the trade union movement and the deindustrialization of the economy. Thus, joining forces with the vibrant new immigrant movement struggling to improve labor conditions could well be the most useful strategy to achieve better conditions for all workers. The awakening of the Latino giant could be just what the movement needs to resume a struggle that has been in retreat since the end of the cold war, when unopposed forces of capital unleashed the experiment in neoliberalism that we now call globalism.

And just as the Latino giant in the belly of the neoliberal beast has caused concern, Latin American nations are doing the same in other outposts of capital. Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay and Venezuela are all tentatively stepping out of the neoliberal embrace and spurning institutions like the International Monetary Fund. They now see how the trade policies of the IMF and other purveyors of the "Washington Consensus" have helped cause the economic distress that triggered immigration to the United States in the first place. Latin American nations are demanding new economic arrangements that offer sustainable solutions.

This struggle requires a vision, a shared notion of an imagined future. The new Latino-led immigration movement could plow the ground for the emergence of such a vision. If nothing else, the vitality of this new activism could provide the spark to jolt the civil rights movement off its ass and back into the mix.

SALIM MUWAKKIL

Salim Muwakkil, a senior editor at In These Times, *is a contributing columnist at the* Chicago Tribune.

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front, and members joined the bodega owner and barber next door in forming a human chain on the Grand Concourse, the historic main street of the South Bronx.

"We live with Mexicans, we live with Central Americans, we live with Africans. The same problem that immigrants are going through, regular people go through," said Wanda Salaman, executive director of MOM, an imposing Afro-Boricua with a round, smiling face framed by a short bob. "The rents aren't cheaper for American citizens, the schools are the same. Just because we're American citizens, it doesn't mean they are going to clean the streets, because they don't." Even if all the undocumented immigrants were deported, Salaman notes, it wouldn't make life better in the South Bronx and other neighborhoods in the United States where working-class and poor African-Americans and Latinos live and work.

Nonetheless, a debate rages on the radio airwaves, in local political circles and in corner shops about whether undocumented immigrants undermine the upward mobility of African-Americans. In a poll conducted by the Pew Hispanic Center, more than a third of African-Americans said they or a family member had lost their job to an undocumented immigrant.

In a heated online discussion among members of the National Conference of Black Political Scientists, one message rang out: Blacks Should Not Suffer Because Mexico Is a Failed State.

However, as San Francisco State political scientist Robert Smith argues, "The damage to African-Americans has been done. There is no way to undo it. I would support the U.S. exercising the right to secure its borders and to remove people who have no right to be here, but it can't be done in a rational, humane way." The only solution for African-Americans is to support legalization, he says. Once those who are most easily exploited obtain legal status, blacks will gain an ally; only together can they revive the working-class struggle.

Some black leaders have joined the push for recognition and rights for undocumented immigrants. At the grassroots, black churches have joined coalitions in cities like Philadelphia and Chicago. Commentators have shunned divisiveness and called for unity. But some wonder whether these efforts at solidarity will overcome the tensions. Erin Aubry Kaplan, a columnist for the *Los Angeles Times*, mused, "The unity is seductive on the surface, but how deep does it go? Blacks and Latinos have different experiences and ideas—not only about what America is but about what it means. And these differences have been suppressed, not examined or celebrated, by the cult of multiculturalism that dominates race relations and fuels the renewed call for black-brown unity."

Many of the organizing networks that summoned stroller-pushing parents and teenagers to the marches were constructed around the transnational life of immigrants and second-generation Americans. Hometown associations and soccer teams, mothers' groups and migrant workers—people who have their feet planted in two countries and live in an America writ large—supplied the people power for the massive demonstrations.

Even so, immigrants built on existing networks of tenant rights groups, antisweatshop coalitions and business and youth groups—networks not constructed around ethnic identity but around the need to deliver the first massive outcry in a generation.

In the South Bronx, MOM has entered the new territory carefully. One member who took a decidedly anti-immigrant stance stopped participating after MOM joined the immigrant rights movement. But as the movement presses on, MOM has added an immigration committee to its projects on housing, youth and education. MOM anointed the welfare recipients who earn their benefits by volunteering with the grassroots group "messengers of the movement" and deployed them throughout the community to register voters and educate their neighborhoods, connecting the fight for legalization with their campaign for working people.

A crop of six "student" organizers has gathered in the back offices of MOM for their afternoon training with veteran organizer Maggie Williams to consider the factors that create the social problems in their communities, and to explore the underlying reasons people immigrate or lack job skills.

Surrounded by photos of inspirational figures—Mother Jones, Malcolm X and Ernesto "Che" Guevara—they prepare for a voter registration drive the next day by concentrating on MOM's first rule for effective recruiting: Understand a person's self-interest as a way to motivate them.

"When you try to get a job you're underexperienced, or you're overexperienced or you get an entry-level job and you're stuck there," said Diane (who wanted her last name withheld), her long legs kicked out under the table. "You start at the bottom and you're working your way up but staying at the bottom."

With a 6.7 percent unemployment rate in the Bronx (the city's overall rate rests at 5.1 percent) and a median household income of $28,705—one of the lowest in the country—the prospects for new jobs, much less a livable wage, are less than bright.

The disproportionately black and Latino residents of New York's poorest neighborhoods die eight years earlier than other New Yorkers because of preventable diseases. Students—black and Latino—attend super-sized schools that combine middle and high schools. These conditions, MOM organizers dryly observe, are tailored to prepare them for the last stop in the assembly line—the mega-prisons, like the new one the city is considering building not too far away. The latest investment by the City Council in the Bronx has come in the form of a proposed 2,000-bed, $375 million prison along the eastern edge of the borough. From across the table, Julio Vargas wonders, "Why are they building more jails and not housing?" To the south, gentrification has spread across the Harlem River from Manhattan, fingering into their neighborhoods.

Given these circumstances, Vargas wonders, why do immigrants still steal across the border or overstay their visas? "Don't they see what's going on in America?" he asks.

They have their own problems, retorts Diane, who admits that she becomes discouraged when she hands out MOM fliers to Spanish-speaking immigrants and they don't follow up.

But then she offers the answer MOM hopes will resonate and keep the movement going. "We're all in the same spot," she says. "That's what each group is seeing." ■

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PROTESTERS' GOALS ARE MOSTLY ABSENT FROM WASHINGTON'S NARROW POLICY DEBATE.

What They're Marching For

SAURAV SARKAR

"Derechos para todos, como agua para todos, como...para todos"—and here I stopped Gustavo (last name withheld), because I didn't know what that last word was.

"Como?" I asked. Smiling, he gestured in different poses as we played charades, and spoke too quickly for me to understand. Finally I got it, as he said "respirar," and held his hands to his nose and breathed in deeply.

"Like air," he had said, "rights for all, as available as water, as available as air."

PETER O. ZIERLEIN

I had approached the Colombian as he stood with his lady friend on Broadway, slightly off to the side of one of the pens the New York Police Department were using to contain demonstrators at an April 10 rally in lower Manhattan. As the speeches from senators and executive directors droned on, the two-year undocumented resident of the United States was clear with me about what he wanted: Green cards. *Ahora.*

When I spoke to Gustavo, just two weeks after the rally of hundreds of thousands in Los Angeles, it wasn't crystal clear where things would head. Depending on what happened in the streets, in nonprofit offices, in Congress and in the White House in the next few months, Gustavo could have ended up with a green card, a work permit, deportation or prison time as a felon, followed by deportation.

As is now widely known, more than a million people in the United States have at different points done exactly what Gustavo did: taken to the streets to protest House Resolution 4437, the bill that would make Gustavo a felon, and asked for something more. However, while that "something more" remains a contentious topic, an increasing number of immigrant advocates and organizers have come to realize that whatever it is, it's missing from the considerations of Congress and the President.

Unfortunately for Gustavo, it is looking more and more likely that he and millions of others who have been in the United States less than five years, or who have crimes on their record, or who fail to meet any number of other hurdles imposed by Congress are either going to be driven deeper underground or be forced to leave the United States in the long run. While acknowledging that the Senate bill offers important benefits—namely some form of legal status for perhaps 3 million undocumented people—advocates like Peter Schey are deeply concerned. Schey, president of the LA-based Center for Human Rights and Constitutional Law, predicts that if Congress passes legislation along the lines of what is on the table now, an enormous underground labor pool—he estimates 20 million people within twenty years—will emerge with restricted rights and few avenues for legalization, allowing US corporations to further exploit both immigrant and citizen labor. Obscured by the rantings of the nativist fringe, who say that anything short of a massive roundup somehow constitutes "amnesty" is the deeply troubling nature of the Senate's approach to immigration, workers' rights, deaths at the border and the criminal justice system. The legislation divides the undocumented into three categories, with onerous waiting periods for green cards and up to sixteen years for citizenship for those eligible, no long-term legalization provisions for most, increased means of criminalizing, jailing and deporting all immigrants, and funding for at least 350 miles of militarized walls along the Mexican border. If a compromise with the even more draconian House bill can be hammered out, the final legislative product is almost certain to be even worse.

This, of course, is not what the millions like Gustavo who have marched in demonstrations since March 10 had in mind. But what *do* they want? A mass mobilization is not a policy forum, but the general sense from people I spoke to was that they wanted to be able to live and work without fear and to have doors opened to them rather than slammed in their face.

Roxana, 26, born in Peru, said she's been in the United States for fifteen years and is now without papers. Her brother was already deported "because the law was closed and he didn't have the opportunity [to legalize]," she said. "People should get papers now."

Thirteen-year-old Brian of the Bronx was marching across the Brooklyn Bridge with his father, Oliver, both undocumented, because he wants "to be able to study what I want...to be a doctor," rather than be sent back to Mexico. His father arrived thirteen years ago, but Brian only joined him four years ago—a typical pattern for immigrants, documented and undocumented. Real-world considerations like these are largely absent from the Congressional legislation.

When I asked her how long immigrants should wait, Yadira Colorado, a Latina citizen, said, "Green cards for everybody in three months."

The four were part of a march and rally of as many as 20,000 immigrants and supporters—mostly Latino—organized by the New York Hispanic Clergy Association and others on April 1.

At the April 10 action in New York, in contravention of the organizers' agenda, thousands held up posters that said AMNISTIA—a bad word in Washington but popular in the streets of New York and Chicago.

Nigerian-born Wale also asked for "amnesty for everyone,

Saurav Sarkar is a freelance writer and immigrant rights activist living in Brooklyn, New York.

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but if that's not possible, amnesty for people who have been here five years," echoing some of the rhetoric coming from the Senate. Wale, who is also undocumented, has been separated from his wife and child for the past several years because his wife's student visa expired while she was back in Africa; she was unable to obtain a tourist visa and is now stuck there.

How did it come about that, after a mass mobilization of millions—likely including more than a million undocumented people themselves—Congress is in fact poised to restrict immigrants' rights?

The bulk of the responsibility lies with a Congress and a President that proved more responsive to pressure from the corporations and the nativist right than to the voices of immigrants. But there is also a case to be made that DC-based immigration policy groups strategized poorly, failing to anticipate an outcome that is hardly surprising and neglecting to listen to the message resounding in the ground-level demonstrations.

"I think several of the leading Beltway advocacy groups have been wooed by the political parties," says Schey. "There's a wide gap between [their positions] and what people are marching for." Juan Carlos Ruiz of the National Capital Immigration Coalition, who works closely with the Washington policy establishment, told me that before the Chicago and Los Angeles mobilizations, some advocacy groups actually pressured him to wait until the Senate acted before calling on people to take to the streets.

One of the most visible faces of the immigration reform movement has been the Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform, formed by unions and several of the most powerful immigration policy groups. Their flagship New American Opportunity Campaign, supported by scores of pro-immigrant groups nationwide, featured an emphasis on securing what could be gained from Congress and the Bush Administration through compromises among CCIR, immigration-friendly Republicans and Democrats, pro-business think tanks like the Manhattan Institute and the Chamber of Commerce, and others with an economic and political stake in retaining large numbers of low-wage immigrants. Its messaging has been wrapped in red, white and blue, and campaign events have been more likely to feature John McCain than Russ Feingold.

Frank Sharry, executive director of the National Immigration Forum (one of CCIR's convening organizations), admitted to me that for "a lot of this work in Washington, there hasn't been a lot of accountability and [there has been] a lot of power." He made this statement a few weeks after the march of more than 500,000 immigrants and supporters in Los Angeles on March 25, which began the transformation of the immigrant rights movement.

The best hope for a movement that can broaden, encompass more issues and work in collaboration with other social justice campaigns may lie, ironically, with those who have been called too narrow in their appeal—the populist upsurge of Mexican, Chicano and Latino communities nationwide and the leaders who initiated it. On February 11 about 600 leaders of the Latino community, mainly Chicano, answered a call by Professor Armando Navarro of the National Alliance for Human Rights to meet at the Riverside Convention Center in California. It was this

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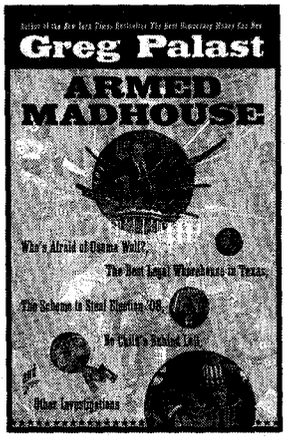

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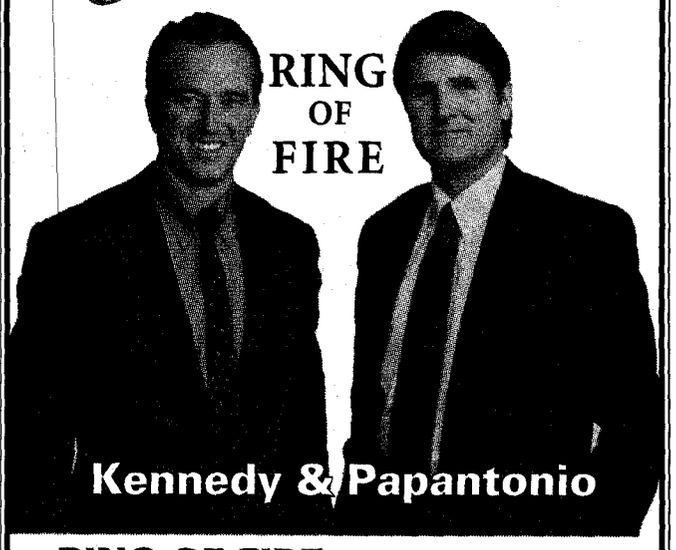

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meeting that initiated the nationwide mobilizations to the House immigration bill. On March 10 a Chicago-based coalition—including Emma Lozano, an attendee of the Riverside meeting—participated in putting together one of the largest marches in Chicago history, which pioneered the use of Spanish-language popular radio DJs as a communications tool. Jesse Diaz, who was involved in the Los Angeles–based March 25 mobilization, was also present.

For the past two months there has been a not-so-subtle competition to lay claim to the street cred attached to the mobilizations, though the primary factors responsible for numbers are probably the underlying demographics of the community in places like Los Angeles and Dallas, the provocation of the nativist right and the willingness of undocumented people and others to risk their jobs and potential deportation by showing up at a demonstration.

To a degree, of course, the protests reflected a concerted effort on the part of a network of organizations. Angelica Salas, executive director of Los Angeles–based CHIRLA, a CCIR board member, argues that the mobilizations were "not a result of a spontaneous need to go out against HR 4437.The reason they are happening is that over a period of many years, immigrant organizations, labor and faith communities have been coordinating and working together across the country, and strategizing together for common goals." Salas points to a March 7 DC meeting that laid the groundwork for establishing March 20–27 as a National Week of Action. The participation of local groups in a national structure, she says, has helped bring day-to-day experiences of immigrants into the policy world.

At the same time, LA's Diaz argues that the DC-based organizations largely control the policy agenda, to the exclusion of more radical perspectives that one finds in the streets. He says of the foundation-funded nonprofits that dominate the institutional infrastructure, "They don't want to rock their money boat, that keeps them walking the whole moderate line. They're not allowed to wander from the path, so they [support] the Kennedy-McCain [bill], that's a compromise. And it goes contrary to the interests of the people."

The inside-outside dynamic that characterizes the emerging immigrant rights movement will hardly be new to students of social movements in the United States. And both sides may end up needing each other at points along the way. The crucial question for today's struggle is whether these groups will be able to meet the needs of the people in the streets by complementing each other, rather than working at cross-purposes.

This may have already begun to happen. Slowly but steadily, as the legislative outlook darkens, even traditionally moderate immigrant rights groups have begun to peel off and express vocal opposition. As the weeks go by, an increasing number of groups have begun to call both the Senate and House bills unacceptable, with about 100 groups signing on to a statement by the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights in late April that proclaimed "No Deal!" and called for Congress to go back to the drawing board. Even some groups that had supported the Senate approach concluded that what was emanating from Congress at the end of the legislative process was not something they could live with. However, CCIR board member National Immigration Forum remains generally supportive, criticizing aspects of the bill but applauding its passage as a "historic bipartisan achievement."

With or without a "comprehensive" bill, what may matter most is that we have witnessed the emergence of a force that may be able to stop and reverse the decade-long trend of xenophobia: a working-class, immigrant Latino movement—with allies in other ethnic communities, radical groups like United for Peace and Justice and those mainstream immigrant rights organizations that are refocusing their energy on organizing, mobilization and political education. If the conditions are right, there is still a chance for the events of the past three months to lead to long-term results for both immigrants and the enormous number of people around the world who are affected by the policies of the US government. Movements have never been built in a day. ■

Letter From Bolivia
by Christian Parenti

MORALES MOVES

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Maybe it's the altitude or the Xanax hangover from the long night flight in, but political culture in Bolivia seems to have changed radically in the past year. Awakening in a shabby La Paz hotel, I turn on the TV. Onscreen sits the usual Barbie doll–style hostess, but she is interviewing Raul Prada, a short, thickset Marxist intellectual with permanently bent eyeglasses. The last time I saw Prada he was in the streets dodging tear gas with the masses. Now an adviser to Evo Morales and his party, the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS), Prada is explaining why the government just nationalized a big part of Bolivia's natural gas industry.

"Nationalization of hydrocarbons has been a demand and a state policy since the defeat of the traditional elites during the Chaco War of 1932–35," says Prada, referring to a cataclysmic bloodletting with Paraguay that was to Bolivia what World War I was to Europe. In 1937 the Bolivian government confiscated Standard Oil's operations in the country—all of them, without compensation.

Christian Parenti is the author of The Freedom: Shadows and Hallucinations in Occupied Iraq *(New Press).* *Research support was provided by the Investigative Fund of The Nation Institute.*

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"By those standards, the current policy isn't even really nationalization," says Prada with a tone of resigned disappointment. The Barbie doll TV hostess nods and follows up with interesting and informed questions: How, exactly, will Bolivia "industrialize" its natural gas reserves? How much will the planned infrastructure cost?

Where is the redbaiting fury, the racist gibes about the Indio Presidente being in over his head? Surprisingly, Morales's May 1 nationalization decree is hardly controversial here. Even large sections of the Bolivian business class support the move.

To be fair, this "nationalization" is really only a limited takeover of three key companies that together control the heart of the Bolivian energy industry. Nor is it radically precipitous. Morales's decree is the culmination of a process that started with the "gas war" of October 2003, which brought down President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada and later his successor, Carlos Mesa. In all, the new moves should earn the government more than $700 million a year in revenue.

Surprisingly, Morales's May 1 nationalization decree is hardly controversial here. Even sections of the business class support it.

The three firms in question were partly sold off—or "capitalized"—during the 1990s. Under the new rules, the government's petroleum company will gain a 51 percent stake in Transredes (owned by Shell), which manages most gas and oil transport including pipelines, as well as in Andina (owned by the Spanish-Argentine firm Repsol YPF) and Chaco (BP and Britain's BG Group), both of which do exploration and primary production. The government is also taking over Bolivia's two main refineries, formerly controlled by Brazil's Petrobras. The twenty or so other foreign companies are left untouched.

For the next six months the government and the three big firms will split gas royalties 82 to 18 percent in the government's favor. During that time new contracts will be negotiated and prices will be raised. But the eventual royalty split will not be as favorable to the government. Right now it seems that most oil companies operating in Bolivia will continue to pay 50 percent royalties, as they have since the Hydrocarbons Law passed in May 2005.

But Morales has promised to go beyond gas. He has announced plans to nationalize mining and forestry, and to confiscate and redistribute unused land to landless farmers. In March the Bolivian government decided it would not renew an expiring three-year financing deal with the International Monetary Fund, after decades of following IMF-imposed austerity programs. The government has boosted the minimum wage, has promised to increase next year's spending on healthcare by 300 percent and has told a major Brazilian mining firm to leave the country because it is allegedly operating illegally.

Morales has also appointed a number of radical outsiders and indigenous activists to his Cabinet. Most prominent among them is Justice Minister Casimira Rodriguez, who started working at age 13 in Cochabamba as a maid. For the mostly white men of the Bolivian bar, this appointment was an insult beyond comprehension. When I interviewed Rodriguez in her awkwardly large office, she seemed genuinely hurt by the attacks against her but politically unfazed. She recounted how she and other maids—some of whom were held as virtual prisoners—used their only free day each week to organize a union for domestic servants. "I have lived with injustice and inequality," said Rodriguez. "It is hard to fight corruption, but I can show the people that this is their house, too."

Despite these moves, many on the Bolivian left still consider Morales a sellout. They point to the 600,000 or more children who go to bed malnourished every night and demand more. One social movement–connected think tank, CEDLA, issued a hyperbolic report blasting the MAS government's first 100 days as "a ratification of neoliberalism." At the offices of CONAMAQ, one of several large Bolivian indigenous federations made up of autonomous *ayllus*, or communities, of Quechua-, Aymara- and Guaraní-speaking people, the critique of brother Evo is more abstract: "He doesn't have an indigenous vision," says the group's president, Anselmo Martinez Tot, who approves of the nationalization but worries that the MAS vision of economic development will erode traditional ways and draw off young people to the city.

"We want independence for Tawantinsuyu," says one of the *maluk*, or local leaders, in the office. He is referring to the huge indigenous nation comprising Bolivia and parts of Chile, Argentina, Peru and Ecuador. The radical fringe of Bolivian *indigenismo*—a force that is politically quite strong—will not be happy with MAS reformism.

True, the new government's first five months have not seen all-out class war or Indian separatism. Instead, MAS officials say they are pursuing a realistic, though less heroic, strategy of reducing poverty by growing and guiding Bolivia's market economy, rather than overthrowing it.

Nonetheless, the policy changes have been enough to seriously irritate George W. Bush and the US pundit class. The President has grumbled about the "erosion of democracy in Bolivia," while others cast their displeasure as mere technocratic concern. Michael Shifter of the Inter-American Dialogue and formerly with the US-funded National Endowment for Democracy said that nationalization "risks alienating natural and otherwise sympathetic partners." Still others suggest that nationalization will end new investment in Bolivian gas exploration.

Bolivian petroleum experts disagree, saying that firms are "standing in line" to get access to the gas fields. But even some in the Morales government express concern about Bolivia's long-term access to Brazil's huge market.

In a long, ornate drawing room in the presidential palace, I meet Vice President Álvaro García Linera, who is sometimes said to be "the brain of the government"—Evo is clearly its soul. Only 42 years old, García Linera has a résumé that already includes stints as a former guerrilla, ex-prisoner, powerhouse author and intellectual, and now one of the most important politicians in Latin America. Over coffee and papaya juice, he explains the economic logic of the new government.

"Transnational corporations are welcome in Bolivia, but they will not dominate the economy. They should expect to

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pay taxes and submit to reasonable environmental and social regulations. But they will still make profits," says the boyish VP. As García Linera sees it, all that the state can do at this stage is impose equilibrium and a minimal humanity on the savageness and chaos that is otherwise Bolivian capitalism.

Looking for the class war and panicking capitalists, I head to the offices of the National Industrial Chamber, but all I find is reasonableness. In retrospect, that makes sense, as this chamber of commerce represents 1,500 mostly small and medium-sized firms involved in textiles, food processing, furniture, metalwork and agriculture, all of which are threatened by free trade on US terms and none of which are oil companies.

"Evo had to nationalize the gas," says Daniel Sanchez, the chamber's president. "We had a referendum in July 2004 and nationalization won overwhelmingly. This is democracy." In two weeks of canvassing politicians, businesspeople and the social movements, I hear this sentiment again and again: Nationalization had to happen because of the July 2004 referendum. If Morales had been any more restrained, he would have faced the wrath of street mobilizations. Even some right-wing ranchers in Bolivia's lowland eastern province of Santa Cruz—where Morales won a stunning 33 percent of the vote—told me that though they disliked nationalization, it was inevitable.

If there are dark clouds on the horizon for MAS, they come from a discontented far left and a bellicose rancher-based right wing.

"As an industrialist I think the new government is going to help us a lot," says Sanchez, who owns and runs two chemical factories that make products for water purification. "The government showed us part of their economic plan. It's very human—they want to fight poverty. But there's also a heavy emphasis on national industry. They want to build the internal market."

According to Sanchez, many industrialists in La Paz have come around to seeing the virtues of the MAS growth strategy. Particularly popular is the idea of a new government bank to provide local industry with cheap credit. They also like proposed programs to support technology transfer: "So we can upgrade to cleaner, more efficient technology and compete better in regional markets." It's a simple equation but one that was for too long obscured in the ideological mumbo jumbo of the Washington Consensus. Having tasted the low-growth, austerity and multinational domination of neoliberalism, many Bolivian business owners finally get it: If poor people have more money, they'll buy more products from local industry.

Nowhere is the link between poverty reduction and the national market clearer than at the office of Cifabol, the industrial organization that represents most of Bolivia's twenty-two small pharmaceutical companies. About 5,000 people work in pharmaceutical manufacturing here, and none of the Big Pharma firms have plants in Bolivia.

A frazzled Joseph Stiglitz has just swept through town as a guest of the Foreign Ministry. His speeches were only tepidly Keynesian, but it was enough to allow many La Paz intellectuals and businesspeople to look favorably on regulation, mild redistribution and state planning. Among those wooed was Cifabol's Dr. Victoria de Urioste Blanco. "The government wants to expand healthcare. We want to expand the internal markets," she explains with a dramatic pause so this dialectical connection between production and consumption can sink in.

Cifabol members have looked into the intellectual property details of various US free-trade proposals and they see that the deck is stacked against them, so they've switched sides and are now backing MAS's economic nationalism.

"Did you know that today the average Bolivian takes only two pills every year? Maybe one aspirin and one Viagra," says Urioste with a sly grin. The Bolivian drug market is only $120 million a year, so any growth could help Cifabol's firms.

Thus, some local elites have started to see beyond Evo's dark skin (that is to say, their own racism) and look at the logic of his policies. And some have even weaned themselves from their sycophantic intellectual habits of believing whatever comes out of Washington. Ranchers, however, are still hostile—there is simply no version of land reform that they favor.

If there are dark clouds on the horizon for MAS, they come from two directions: a discontented far left and a bellicose, possibly US-backed lowland-rancher-based right wing. But the two threats are almost mutually exclusive. If the right moves against MAS, the left will likely unite. If the right sits by and tolerates a few defeats, then the left could make Morales's term hell with demands for accelerated social change and economic redistribution.

Most frightening so far seems to be the Santa Cruz–based far right. Rumors abound of Colombian mercenaries training on big Bolivian ranches. And several Cruzano political figures, like Ruben Costas, prefect of Santa Cruz province, have intimated that they will "resist domination" from the central government. Branko Marinkovic is one of the Cruzano heavies. He is president of the Federation of Private Industries in Santa Cruz, a big rancher and like many elites in Bolivia's east a descendant of Croatian immigrants. He tells me he's made his peace with the gas nationalization, but he sounds ominous, if conflicted, on other issues. "Land reform could lead to civil war," says Marinkovic in Texan-flavored English, the product of six years studying at the University of Texas, Houston. When I ask if he is building a private militia, as is rumored, he is dismissive. "That's BS. Just BS. I am running a huge business here. I am not involved in anything like that." What else could he say?

Then, sounding less menacing, Marinkovic tells me he's even "OK with" the government's plans to tax land sales. "If that stops speculation, fine," he says. The Cruzanos were also relieved when García Linera said the government would not limit the size of ranches. The point seems to be that big, even huge, ranches are acceptable as long as the owners are investing their capital to employ people and produce food. The government's threat of confiscation might even cause some Cruzano speculators to take money out of distant financial markets and invest in real economic activity in Bolivia. For the time being, that's all MAS can ask for—a less parasitic, less volatile, fairer version of market economics. ■

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

The Missionary Position

LAILA LALAMI

THE CAGED VIRGIN: An Emancipation Proclamation for Women and Islam.
By Ayaan Hirsi Ali.
Free Press. 187 pp. $19.95.

THE TROUBLE WITH ISLAM TODAY.
By Irshad Manji.
St. Martin's. 234 pp. Paper $12.95.

These days, being a Muslim woman means being saddled with what can only be referred to as the "burden of pity." The feelings of compassion that we Muslim women seem to inspire emanate from very distinct and radically opposed currents: religious extremists of our own faith, and evangelical and secular supporters of empire in the West.

Radical Islamist parties claim that the family is the cornerstone of society and that women, by virtue of their reproductive powers, are its builders. An overhaul of society must therefore begin with reforming the status of women, and in particular with distinguishing clearly their roles from those of men. Guided by their "true" interpretations of the faith, these radicals want women to resume their traditional roles of nurturers and men to be empowered to lead the family. If we protect women's rights in Islam, they assure us, the *umma*, the community of believers, will be lifted from its general state of poverty and backwardness.

Sayyid Qutb (1906–66), the Egyptian writer and activist who has exerted such a powerful influence over the radical Islamist movement, fervently believed that Muslim women belonged in the home. In his 1964 book *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq* (Milestones), Qutb wrote that "if woman is freed from her basic responsibility of bringing up children" and, whether on her own or by pressure from society, seeks to work in jobs such as "a hostess or a stewardess in a hotel or ship or air company," she will be "using her ability for material productivity rather than the training of human beings." This, he claimed, would make the entire civilization "backward." The misogynistic philosophy has proved enticing, finding advocates among Muslims throughout the world. Between 1989 and 1991, for instance, Abbassi Madani, the red-bearded founder of the Algerian Islamic Salvation Front Party (FIS), often referred to women who refused to cover themselves with a hijab as "sparrow hawks of neocolonialism." His co-founder, Ali Belhadj, claimed that there was a simple solution to the country's high unemployment rate: turn over the jobs of working women to idle men. Madani summarized his program: "The system is sick; the doctor is FIS; and the medicine has existed for fourteen centuries. It is Islam." Reducing Algerian women to birds of prey, and their faith to a pill: These are good indicators of the depth of intellect within the leadership of the FIS.

Both radical Islamists and apologists for the American empire express great concern for Muslim women. With friends like these...

Meanwhile, the abundant pity that Muslim women inspire in the West largely takes the form of impassioned declarations about "our plight"—reserved, it would seem, for us, as Christian and Jewish women living in similarly constricting fundamentalist settings never seem to attract the same concern. The veil, illiteracy, domestic violence, gender apartheid and genital mutilation have become so many hot-button issues that symbolize our status as second-class citizens in our societies. These expressions of compassion are often met with cynical responses in the Muslim world, which further enrages the missionaries of women's liberation. Why, they wonder, do Muslim women not seek out the West's help in freeing themselves from their societies' retrograde thinking? The poor things,

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they are so oppressed they do not even know they are oppressed.

The sympathy extended to us by Western supporters of empire is nothing new. In 1908 Lord Cromer, the British consul general in Egypt, declared that "the fatal obstacle" to the country's "attainment of that elevation of thought and character which should accompany the introduction of Western civilization" was Islam's degradation of women. The fact that Cromer raised school fees and discouraged the training of women doctors in Egypt, and in England founded an organization that opposed the right of British women to suffrage, should give us a hint of what his views on gender roles were really like. Little seems to have changed in the past century, for now we have George W. Bush, leader of the free world, telling us, before invading Afghanistan in 2001, that he was doing it as much to free the country's women as to hunt down Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar. Five years later, the Taliban is making a serious comeback, and the country's new Constitution prohibits any laws that are contrary to an austere interpretation of Sharia. Furthermore, among the twenty-odd reasons that were foisted on the American public to justify the invasion of Iraq in 2003 was, of course, the subjugation of women; this, despite the fact that the majority of Iraqi women were educated and active in nearly all sectors of a secular public life. Three years into the occupation, the only enlightened aspect of Saddam's despotic rule has been dismantled: Facing threats from a resurgent fundamentalism, both Sunni and Shiite, many women have been forced to quit their jobs and to cover because not to do so puts them in harm's way. Why Mr. Bush does not advocate for the women of Thailand, the women of Botswana or the women of Nepal is anyone's guess.

This context—competing yet hypocritical sympathies for Muslim women—helps to explain the strong popularity, particularly in the post–September 11 era, of Muslim women activists like Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Irshad Manji and the equally strong skepticism with which they are met within the broad Muslim community. These activists are passionate and no doubt sincere in their criticism of Islam. But are their claims unique and innovative, or are they mostly unremarkable? Are their conclusions borne out by empirical evidence, or do they fail to meet basic levels of scholarship? The casual reader would find it hard to answer these questions, because there is very little critical examination of their work. For the most part, the loudest responses have been either hagiographic profiles of these "brave" and "heroic" women, on the one hand, or absurd and completely abhorrent threats to the safety of these "apostates" and "enemies of God," on the other.

Although Ayaan Hirsi Ali's and Irshad Manji's critiques of Islam have caused a stir, they have attracted very little critical examination.

Ayaan Hirsi Ali was born in Mogadishu, Somalia. Her father, Hirsi Magan Isse, was a prominent critic of the Siyad Barre regime, and the family had to flee the country, first to Saudi Arabia and then to Ethiopia and Kenya. When Hirsi Ali was 22, her father arranged a marriage for her with a distant relation. On a layover in Germany en route to Canada, where the man lived, Hirsi Ali escaped to the Netherlands, where she applied for and received asylum. She worked as an interpreter for Somali refugees and studied political science at the University of Leiden. Hirsi Ali first came into the public eye in 2002, with the publication of *De Zoontjesfabriek* (The Son Factory), whose vehement criticisms of Islam made her the subject of death threats. She joined a think tank affiliated with the social-democratic Labor Party but a year later switched membership to the right-wing VVD Party, which had invited her to run for a seat in Parliament. She won, and became a member of Parliament in January 2003. Hirsi Ali explained her shifting allegiance by saying that the VVD granted her greater ability to advocate for the rights of Muslim women. Then in 2004, she wrote the script to the short film *Submission*, which was directed by Theo van Gogh, a man who was known for his virulently anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim statements. That fall, van Gogh was slaughtered in Amsterdam, in broad daylight, by a Dutch man named Mohammed Bouyeri, whose parents had emigrated from Morocco. A letter left on van Gogh's body made it clear that Hirsi Ali was the next target. She immediately went into hiding and has needed heavy protection ever since. A few years ago, Hirsi Ali admitted to lying on her asylum application, but a Dutch TV documentary challenged her on other details of her life, including whether or not she was forced into marriage. The revelations sparked a row that culminated when Rita Verdonk, the Minister of Integration and a member of Hirsi Ali's own party, informed her that she could no longer consider herself a Dutch citizen. Although there has been no specific move to strip her of citizenship, Hirsi Ali has already announced that she is resigning from Parliament and moving to the United States, where she will take up a position at the right-wing American Enterprise Institute.

Irshad Manji was born near Kampala, Uganda, into a Pakistani family. When the country's dictator, Idi Amin Dada, announced that the national economy was to be placed in the hands of black people, he forced the large and thriving South Asian minority out of the country. In 1972, when Manji was 4 years old, her family fled to Canada and settled there. She grew up in Vancouver, where she went to public school. In her free time, she attended Rose of Sharon Baptist Church, and later a conservative Islamic madrassa, from which she was expelled for asking too many pointed questions. She graduated from the University of British Columbia with a degree in intellectual history, and later worked as a speechwriter and broadcaster. Manji rose to prominence in 2004, when her controversial book *The Trouble With Islam* was published. She received death threats and lived under police protection for some time before deciding to forgo the bodyguards. "[If] I'm going to have legitimacy conveying to Muslims that we can dissent with the establishment and live, I can't have a big, burly fellow looking over my shoulder. I must lead by example," she wrote. She is currently a visiting fellow with the International Security Studies Program at Yale University.

There are some striking parallels between the experiences of Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Irshad Manji. They were both born, only a year apart, in East Africa—Hirsi Ali in 1969, and Manji in 1968. Both were forced by politically repressive regimes into exile from their homelands at an early age. Both can trace their "emancipation" to a single, significant, life-changing event. Both credit the West for giving them not just freedom of speech but the very ability to think for themselves. Hirsi Ali states that she is "the living proof" that Western culture enabled her to come fully into her own, while Manji declares, "I owe the West my willingness to help reform Islam." Both women express an unabashed disdain for multiculturalism, which they accuse of fostering a climate of political correctness that

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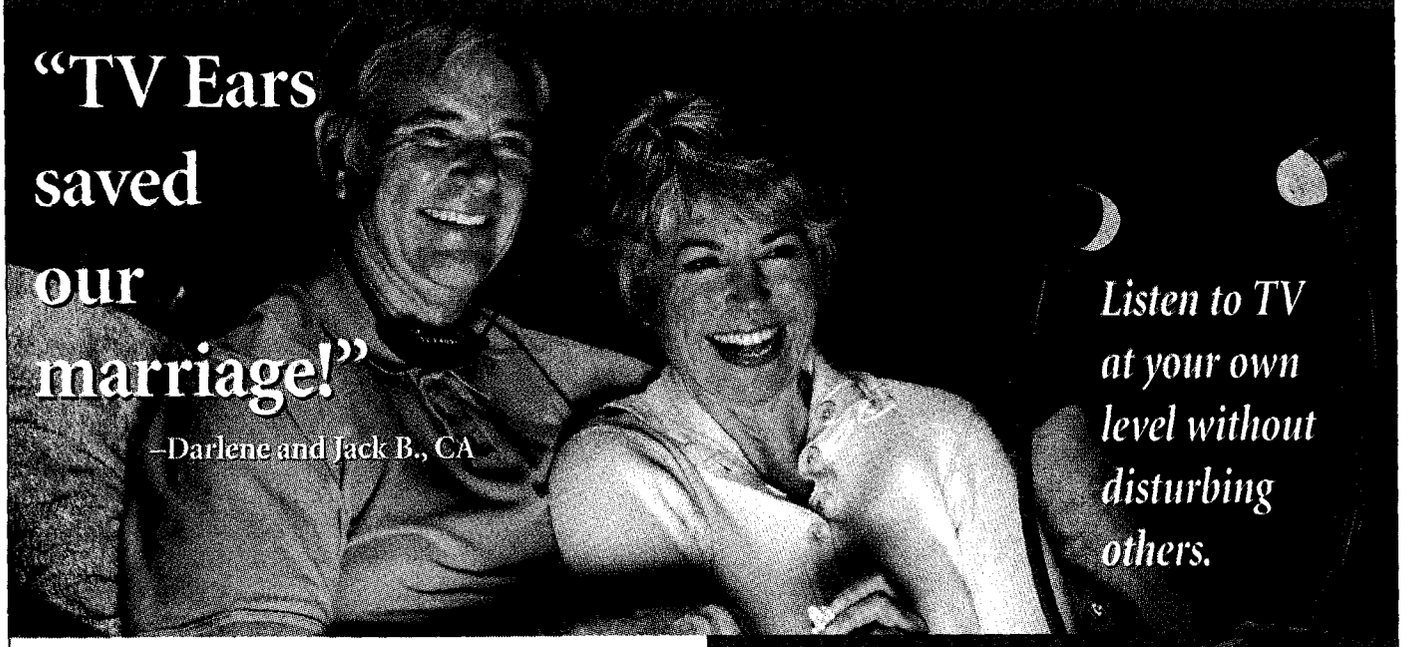

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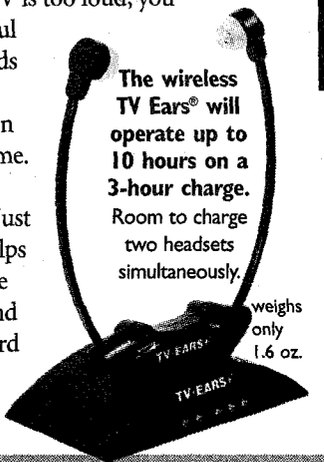

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prevents dialogue and useful criticism. Both supported the American invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq in the "war on terror." Finally, both women have recently published books in the United States. For Manji, it is *The Trouble With Islam Today*, a slightly expanded edition of her 2004 bestseller. (Manji explains in an afterword why the temporal specification was added to the title.) For Hirsi Ali it is *The Caged Virgin: An Emancipation Proclamation for Women and Islam*.

The Caged Virgin is a collection of seventeen short essays and articles on the question of Islam, translated by Jane Brown. Hirsi Ali discusses the rights of individuals in Muslim countries and in Muslim communities in the West, she disagrees vehemently with the ways sacred texts invade secular space and she criticizes what she sees as the lax policies of Western European states toward their Muslim minorities. "I have taken an enormous risk by answering the call for self-reflection," she declares. "And what do the cultural experts say? 'You should have said it in a different way.' But since Theo van Gogh's death, I have been convinced more than ever that I must say it in *my* way only and have *my* criticism." Let us then follow Hirsi Ali's example, and look critically at her words.

The overarching argument in *The Caged Virgin* is that there is insufficient freedom for the individual in Islam. This, Hirsi Ali argues, is because one of the fundamental tenets of the religion is the submission of the individual to God, which creates a strict hierarchy of allegiances. At the top of this hierarchy is God, then His Prophet, then the *umma*, then the clan or tribe and finally the family. The individual, she insists, is simply not valued. Whatever one thinks of this hierarchy, however, it is hardly unique to Islam; one can make the same argument about other monotheistic religions. Furthermore, many Muslim countries are in fact secular or military dictatorships (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Syria, Egypt), while others are to one extent or another theocracies (Saudi Arabia, Iran, Sudan). Religious hierarchy does not play the same societal role in Turkmenistan as in Saudi Arabia. On top of this, there are political, national and linguistic considerations to take into account, particularly when one is making claims about fifty-seven nations spread out across Asia and Africa. But Hirsi Ali addresses none of these. In her view, they simply do not matter. Rather, she sees Islam itself as the problem and its fundamental tenet of obstructing individual freedom as the very reason the Muslim world is "falling behind" the West.

Beginning at birth, she maintains, the child is taught that his life must be governed by Islam, hatred for the infidel and the preservation of his honor through the control of women's sexuality. It is as if she were suggesting the existence of some sort of "genetic" encoding of Islam in children, which prevents them from thinking for themselves. "[We] Muslims have religion inculcated into us from birth, and that is one of the very reasons for our falling behind the West in technology, finance, health, and culture." "Every Muslim, from the beginnings of Islam to the present day, is raised in the belief that all knowledge can be found in the Koran." "For Muslim children the study of biology and history can be very confusing." Reading these lines, one must ask: What sociological evidence is there for this claim that Islam makes people inherently incapable of independent thought and of studying science? The answer is: None. One is merely given Hirsi Ali's assurances that she knows what is going on behind closed doors, based on her own experiences of growing up in Somalia and of working as an interpreter for Muslim immigrants in the Netherlands.

Hirsi Ali decries Islam's 'doctrine of virginity,' but is the Koran's opposition to premarital sex all that different from the Bible's?

The notion that there is a breach of individualism that is specific to Islam is raised again in Hirsi Ali's discussion of "sexual morality." In the book's opening piece, "Stand Up for Your Rights!" she writes about the continuing obsession with female virginity, which is widespread throughout the Muslim world and which, it must be acknowledged, causes no shortage of heartache. Girls who lose their virginity before marriage can sometimes face serious consequences in Muslim countries, particularly in rural areas. "I am distressed," she writes, "that the vast majority of Muslim women are still enchained by the doctrine of virginity, which requires that women enter marriage as green as grass: experience of love and sexuality before marriage is an absolute taboo. This taboo does not apply to men." Hirsi Ali is correct to say that the burden of virginity weighs disproportionately on females in Muslim cultures, though she fails to point out that the Koran emphasizes virginity and forbids both genders from having premarital sex. In this respect, the Koran is no different from the Bible. It is therefore a matter of cultural practice that the "doctrine of virginity" is still strong in the Muslim world.

This lumping together of various Islams—the geographical region, the Abrahamic religion, the historical civilization and the many individual cultures—is symptomatic of the entire book, and makes it particularly difficult to engage with Hirsi Ali in a useful way. Her discussion of female genital mutilation (FGM) is a case in point. In at least six of the seventeen essays, she cites the horrendous practice of FGM, which involves excising, in whole or in part, young girls' inner or outer labia, and in severe cases even their clitorises. Hirsi Ali is aware that the practice predates Islam, but, she maintains, "these existing local practices were spread by Islam." According to the United Nations Population Fund, FGM is practiced in sub-Saharan Africa by Animists, Christians and Muslims alike, as well as by Ethiopian Jews, sometimes in collusion with individual representatives of the faiths. For instance, the US State Department report on FGM reveals that some Coptic Christian priests "refuse to baptize girls who have not undergone one of the procedures." And yet Hirsi Ali does not blame Animism, Christianity or Judaism for FGM, or accuse these belief systems of spreading it. With Islam, however, such accusations are acceptable.

A few years ago, Hirsi Ali proposed a bill in the Dutch Parliament that would require young girls from immigrant communities to undergo a vaginal exam once a year as a way to insure that the parents do not practice FGM. The suggestion is all the more interesting when one considers that the vast majority of Muslim immigrants to the Netherlands are from Turkey and Morocco, where FGM is unheard of. But there is a personal reason for this passionate stance: When Hirsi Ali was 5 years old, her grandmother had the procedure performed on her, without her father's knowledge or approval. The experience marked Hirsi Ali profoundly, and the fervor and determination she brings to the fight against this horrifying practice are utterly laudable. By making inaccurate statements like the one quoted above, however, she muddies the issues and alienates the very people who would have the religious standing in the community to make this practice disappear.

On more than a few occasions, Hirsi Ali

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Imagine cities you've
Inhabited, streets
Paved in lava stone.
You never intended to pray

In the temples, had
Nothing to sell.
Now imagine yourself
Returning to those same cities.
The river flows, the summit

Emerges each morning from the haze.
Hunt for people you knew,
Knock on their doors.
Ask yourself

Where are the vases, animals
Etched in gold?
Where are the wines

From distant places,
Banquets ferreted
From the bowels of the earth?
While you were missing

Other people wore
Your garments,
Slept in your bed.
How frightening
The man who said
In his affliction

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If the root grows old
And the trunk withers
In dust, at the scent of water
It will germinate.

James Longenbach

makes baffling, blanket statements about women in Muslim countries. "[If] defloration occurs outside wedlock, [the girl] has dishonored her family to the tenth degree of kinship." Why not eleven? Or twelve? Where did the number ten come from? We are never told, and no source is adduced to support this claim. Not content with making inaccurate and sweeping claims about various cultures, Hirsi Ali also ventures into the field of literary criticism: "Alongside [religious textbooks] there are novels by Muslims about love, politics, and crime, in which the role of Islam and the Prophet Muhammad are studiously avoided, although the moral undercurrent is that one should observe religious precepts, otherwise things end very badly." It might come as news to Arab, African and Asian novelists of the Muslim persuasion that their fiction is merely an excuse to proselytize. Is the reader seriously expected to believe that the work of Orhan Pamuk promotes the observance of religion? Or that the texts of Assia Djebbar, Tahar Djaout, Tahar Ben Jelloun, Abdellatif Laabi, Kamal Ghitani, Nawal Al-Saadawi, Ahdaf Soueif, Alifa Rifaat, Abdulrazak Gurnah, Ghassan Kanafani, Nuruddin Farah, Tayeb Salih, Kateb Yacine, Mahmoud Darwish, Pramoedya Ananta Toer and Tariq Ali advocate religious morality?

Along the same lines, Hirsi Ali seems to believe that Muslims are deficient in critical thought: "Very few Muslims are actually capable of looking at their faith critically. Critical minds like those of Afshin Ellian in the Netherlands and Salman Rushdie in England are exceptions." The work of Khaled Abou El Fadl, Fatima Mernissi, Leila Ahmed, Reza Aslan, Adonis, Amina Wadud, Nawal Saadawi, Mohja Kahf, Asra Nomani and the thousands of other scholars working in both Muslim countries and the West easily contradicts the notion. In any case, why the comparison with Rushdie? Have fatwas become the yardstick by which we measure criticism? If so, this suggests that the people who offend Islamists are the only ones worth listening to, which is ridiculous. The most shocking statement, however, comes from the essay "The Need for Self-Reflection Within Islam," in which Hirsi Ali writes: "After the events of 9/11, people who deny this characterization of the stagnant state of Islam were challenged by critical outsiders to name a single Muslim who had made a discovery in science or technology, or changed the world through artistic achievement. There is none." That a person who has apparently never heard of the algebra of Al-Khawarizmi, the medical prowess of Ibn-Sina and Ibn-Rushd, or the music of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and Umm Kulthum is considered an authority on Islam is proof, if ever one was needed, of the utter lack of intelligent discourse about the civilization and the cultures broadly defined by that word.

And how does the American press reward such stunningly ignorant scholarship? *Time* magazine picked Hirsi Ali as one of 100 "most influential people" of 2005, people with "the clout and power to change our world." At the other end of the spectrum, the answer is even more spectacularly stupid: Islamic radicals have called for Hirsi Ali's death repeatedly since 2002. Whatever the merits of Hirsi Ali's arguments, one thing is clear: By making threats against her person, right-wing Muslims appear to agree with Western conservatives that Islam as a whole (religion, region, culture) is weak, unable to defend itself by intellectual reasoning. It is also quite ironic that these radical Muslims are guilty of violating the first right their faith grants them: The right to choose their beliefs. "Let there be no compulsion in religion," the Koran insists. And for good reason, too, because without the right to choose (new) beliefs, there would have been no Islam in the first place.

The argument that pervades *The Caged Virgin*—that Muslim women need Western advocates—is premised on two assumptions. The first is that Muslim women somehow cannot speak up for themselves—what Edward Said once called "the silence of the native." Hirsi Ali demonstrates this: "The [reason] I am determined to make my voice heard is that Muslim women are scarcely listened to, and they need a woman to speak out on their behalf." If, as the title of this book suggests, the Muslim woman is a virgin in a cage, then by definition she must be freed from the outside. Someone must break the lock so that the poor woman can finally step out and speak for herself. But Muslim women are not, nor have they ever been, silent. For example, a significant portion of *hadith*, the Prophet's sayings that form the basis of the Sunna, are attributed to his wife Aisha. Here is a sample *hadith*: "Narrated Aisha: The Prophet said, 'All drinks that produce intoxication are *haram*.'" But how did Aisha narrate this saying? Was it by sitting at home, in a cage, or by actively engaging with her community and teaching the *hadith* to the congregation? This tradition of engagement has continued, and

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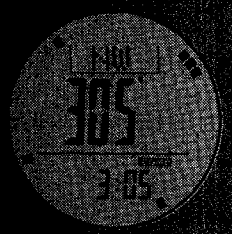

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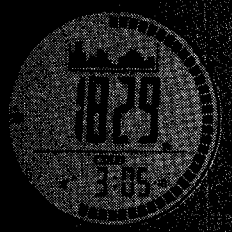

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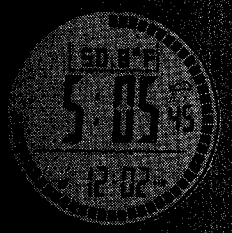

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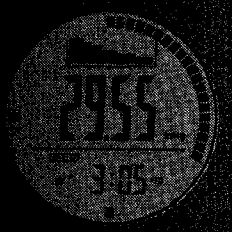

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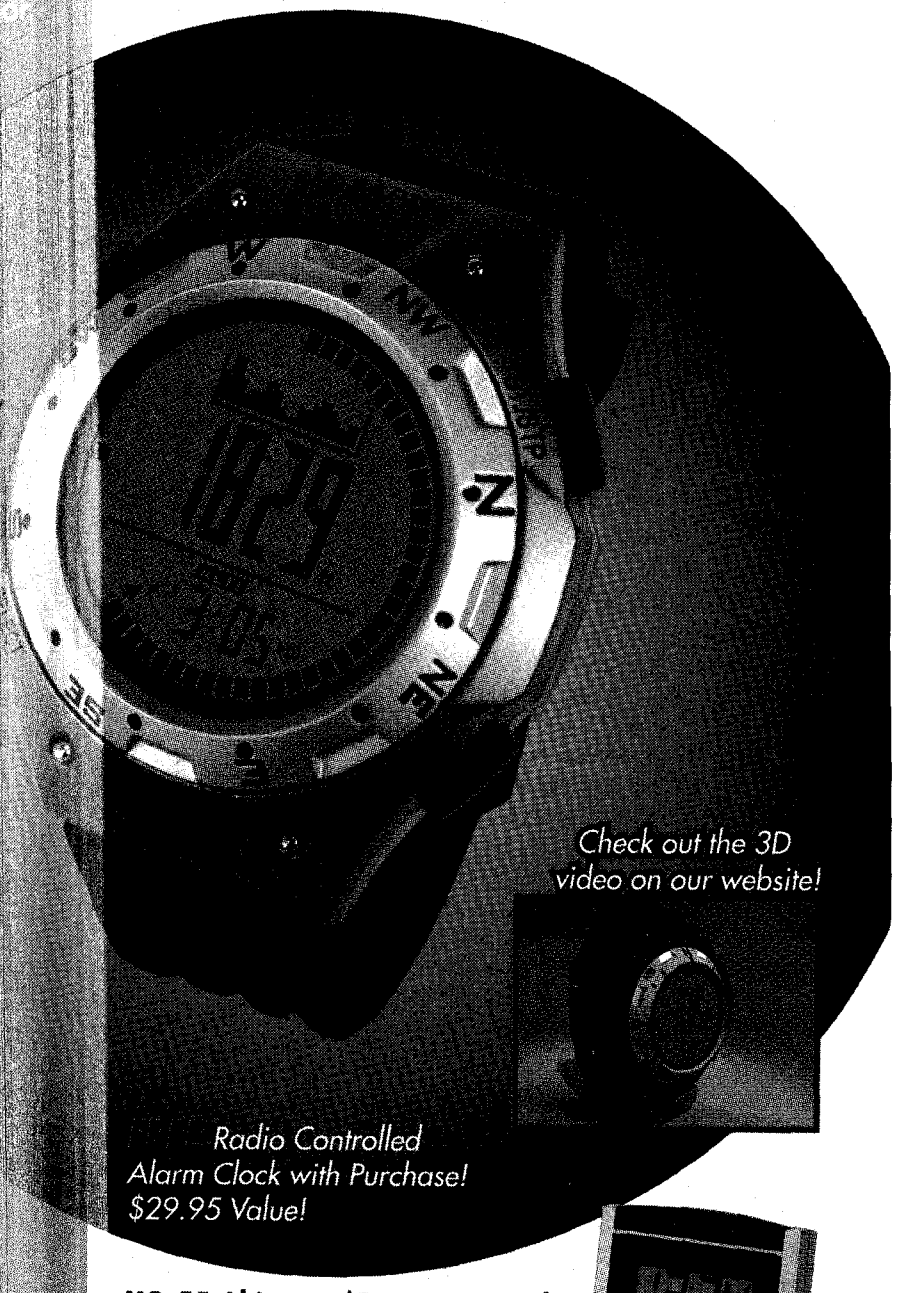

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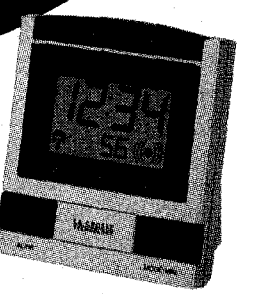

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Muslim women have made their marks in all fields—whether religion or science or medicine or literature. Over the past century, they have organized in groups dedicated to fight for the advancement of their rights. Even under the inhumane Taliban regime, the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan remained active, providing literacy courses and medical services to women and girls. That these women are thought to be invisible is a testament to the patriarchal systems—on either side—that want to protect them. But it cannot be a testament to their silence.

The second premise of the argument is the critic's supposed authority as a "native informant," which alone, and without scholarly training, qualifies her to speak of the entire religion. Indeed, Hirsi Ali tells us,

> By our Western standards Muhammad is a perverse man. A tyrant. He is against freedom of expression. If you don't do as he says, you will end up in hell. That reminds me of those megalomaniacal rulers in the Middle East: Bin Laden, Khomeini, and Saddam. Are you surprised to find a Saddam Hussein? Muhammad is his example; Muhammad is an example to all Muslim men. Why do you think so many Islamic men use violence? You are shocked to hear me say these things, but like the majority of the native Dutch population, you overlook something: you forget where I am from. I used to be a Muslim; I know what I am talking about.

In numerous passages of the book, however, Hirsi Ali demonstrates precisely that she doesn't know what she is talking about. Take her statement on abortion: "According to Islam, an extramarital pregnancy brings great shame on the family, but you can still redeem yourself in the eyes of Allah. Abortion, though, the killing of an innocent baby, is a deadly sin, for which there is no forgiveness." But abortion is not universally disallowed in Islam, simply because there is not a uniform position about the issue. In the Hanbali, Shafii and Hanafi schools in Sunni Islam, for instance, abortion before the fetus has developed into a human being (what is called "ensoulment") is, in fact, permissible. Scholars differ on the lengths of time "ensoulment" takes, with definitions as narrow as forty days and as broad as 120 days (i.e., the first trimester). All schools of thought allow abortion if the pregnancy is liable to cause medical harm to the mother.

The question that must be posed, then, is whether the cause of women's emancipation can be advanced when it is argued in such a sloppy and factually inaccurate manner as it is in *The Caged Virgin*. One might go a step further and ask about the intended audience for such a book. Given the heavy reliance on the twin premises of "the native is silent" and "the native informant knows best," it seems possible that the book is not so much addressed to Muslims—who, in any case, Hirsi Ali believes to be deficient in individual and critical thinking—as to Western advocates for Muslim women.

To her credit, Irshad Manji appears to be acutely aware of the audience question, and tackles it on the first page of *The Trouble With Islam Today*. The book is written as an open letter, addressed directly to Muslims, both in and outside the West. And it also helps the critical reader that Manji backs her claims with source notes, which are listed on her website, Muslim-refusenik.com. *The Trouble With Islam Today* is a chronicle of Manji's personal journey of introspection and discovery about her faith, prompted in part by the constant stream of horrendous news about repression that seems to pour out from (the region of) Islam. "When I consider all the fatwas being hurled by the brain trust of our faith, I feel utter embarrassment," she writes.

Unlike Hirsi Ali, Manji has not openly renounced her faith, although, she says, "Islam is on very thin ice with me." She attributes her skepticism to her childhood experiences at the madrassa she attended in Vancouver. In the orthodox, gender-segregated school, she could not visit the library freely; instead, she had to wait for all the men to clear the area where it was located in order to be able to browse the offerings. The imam was a stern man who discouraged questions and proffered dogma. So woeful was the training Manji received that she did not know that Islam was an Abrahamic religion until after she left the confines of the madrassa. Later, when she purchased an English-language Koran, she finally embarked on her own journey of learning.

Much of what Manji describes will be familiar to those who have read reform-minded books on Islam. For instance, she questions the assumption that the Koran is the inviolate word of God and has remained so for fourteen centuries, without a single diacritic or vowel-length change. She tells the controversial story of the "Satanic verses" (also known as *hadith al-gharaniq*) to show that this point is debatable. According to some scholars, the Prophet had included verses that referred to Meccan goddesses while reciting lines from the Koran. Later, realizing they were not inspired by revelation, he abrogated them from the sacred text. This, of course, establishes a precedent that the Koran was changed at least once. Why is it so hard to imagine, she asks, that other human beings could have added their own changes? She rightly argues that both the terrorists and the peacekeepers among Muslims find scriptural support for their views in the Koran. (Incidentally, this is no different from the Bible, whose most peaceful and most violent verses have been used at various points in history to back up the institution of slavery as well as abolition and the civil rights movement.) A significant portion of the book consists of calling on Arabs and Muslims to be responsible for their own destinies, and to stop blaming the West or Israel for their problems. The style here may be very blunt, but the proposition is wholly unoriginal. One can read similar statements in commentary and op-ed pieces of many newspapers across the Arab world.

Unfortunately, like Hirsi Ali, Manji consistently gives individual examples of malfeasance and then extrapolates to the entire body of Muslims. In discussing World War II, for instance, she writes, "Let's be straight about what else happened during the Nazi years: Muslim complicity in the Holocaust." Here she trots out the story of Haj Amin al-Husayni, the mufti of Jerusalem who visited Berlin as a guest of Hitler and approved of his genocidal agenda. But how do we move from one cleric with authority in one congregation to "Muslim complicity"? And if it turns out that there are individual Muslims who helped Jews escape the Holocaust, do we then get to talk about "Muslim resistance" to the Holocaust? After all, Abdol-Hossein Sardari, head of the consular section of the Iranian embassy under the Vichy government, succeeded in convincing the Nazis that Iranian Jews were not Semites, thus saving their lives. He went a step further and issued 500 Iranian passports to non-Iranian Jews in France. Similarly, the Sultan of Morocco flatly refused to hand Moroccan Jews over to the Vichy government that ruled his country. But people such as these do not fit the paradigm of Muslim backwardness and outright evil, and so they go unmentioned.

As with Hirsi Ali, Manji's expertise on

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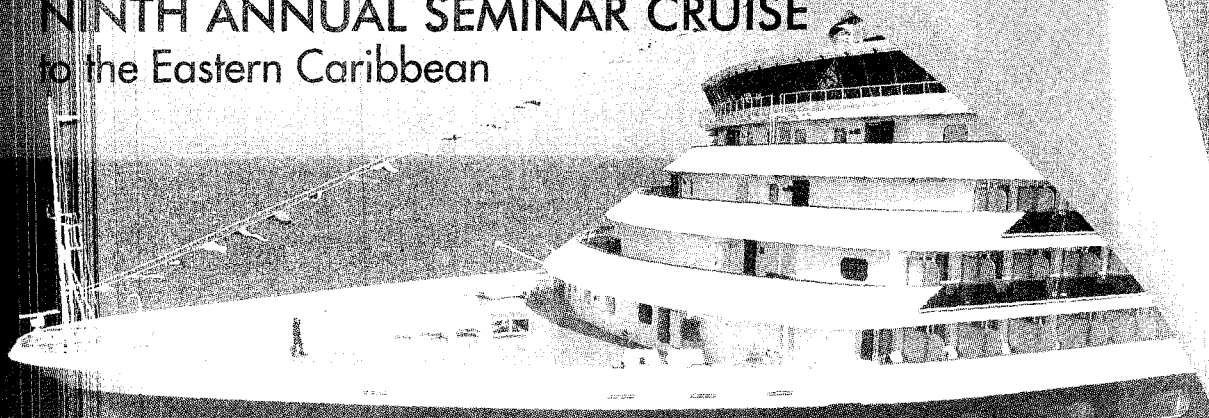

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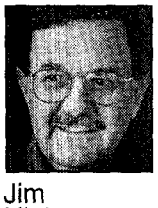

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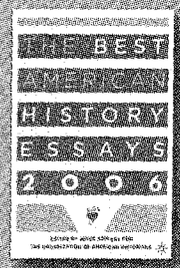

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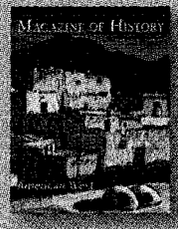

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her subject is incomplete. Take the following statement: "The Koran appears to be organized by size of verse—from longer to shorter—and not by chronology of revelation. How can anyone isolate the "earlier" passages, let alone read into them the "authentic" message of the Koran? We have to own up to the fact that the Koran's message is all over the bloody map." This is simply not true. Each *sura* of the Koran is identified by whether it is "Meccan" or "Medinan," depending on whether it was revealed early in the Prophet's spiritual life or later on, during his *hegira* in Medina. Some verses are addressed to specific communities of believers. Others refer to specific historical events. All of these details help establish temporal contextualization. The study of the Koran's chronology is a whole field unto itself. In addition, and despite having written a book called *The Trouble With Islam Today*, Manji has not taken the trouble of learning to speak, read and write Arabic fluently, nor of visiting any Muslim country. She left Uganda at the age of 4 and has absolutely no experience of what it is like to live in a Muslim country. Would a scholar who has written a book about China without bothering to speak Chinese or visit the country be taken seriously?

Despite its careful sourcing, Manji's book is a narrow polemic, selectively citing events and anecdotes that fit one paradigm only: Muslim savagery, which of course is contrasted with Western enlightenment. Several of Manji's claims about the Arab world are based on articles translated by the nonprofit organization Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), which was founded by Col. Yigal Carmon, a twenty-two-year veteran of military intelligence in Israel with the goal of exploring the Middle East "through the region's media." MEMRI focuses on the following areas: Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Palestine, Persian Gulf, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon and Turkey. There are three general observations that can be made about MEMRI's work. One is that it consistently picks the most violent, hateful rubbish it can find, translates it and distributes it in e-mail newsletters to media and members of Congress in Washington. The second is that MEMRI does not translate comparable articles published in Israel, although the country is not only a part of the Middle East but an active party to some of its most searing conflicts. For instance, when the right-wing Israeli politician Effi Eitam referred to Israel's Palestinian citizens as a "cancer," MEMRI did not pick up this story. The third is that this organization is now the main source of media articles on the region of Islam, a far greater and far more diverse whole than the individual countries it lists. The reliance on MEMRI highlights Manji's lack of direct, unmediated exposure to the news media of the area about which she expresses such fierce convictions.

Equally troubling is Manji's unsubstantiated assertion that there is little dissent in Islam: "We Muslims have a lot of catching up to do in the dissent department." As it happens, earlier this year the Moroccan government took the commendable step of officially acknowledging that approximately 10,000 people had been put in prison, tortured or killed for political reasons between 1956 and 1999. (Human rights organizations caution that the number of victims may in fact have been much larger.) Their "crimes" ranged from wanting to overthrow the monarchy, to questioning official edicts, to simply handing out left-wing leaflets. The problem isn't the lack of dissent. It is the lack of a context in which dissent is welcomed rather than repressed. This repression, furthermore, is tacitly supported by Western powers. The American government, in particular, is so pleased with Morocco's methods of repression that it allegedly "renders" some of its recalcitrant detainees there. The experience of Morocco with repression is not unique and can be seen in other countries in the region broadly defined as "Islam"—countries such as Syria, Algeria, Indonesia, Egypt and so on. To say that there is no dissent in Islam is simply absurd. The claim must be recognized for what it is: a different manifestation of the "silence of the native," which brings us back to the need for outside advocates and to the nifty excuse for outside interference into the affairs of sovereign states.

Unlike Hirsi Ali, however, Manji takes a much broader view about women in Islam. She places the question in the general context of civil rights in Islam. Here she focuses in particular on the status of minorities. Manji maintains that as a civilization Islam has never treated minorities with respect, only with contempt. She does mention that during the golden age of Islam, Jews and Christians held significant positions within the empire. But, she says, this cannot cover for the systematic treatment of them as "different." In comparison, she argues, Israel has a far better record of treating its minorities. As evidence of this, she recounts a number of anecdotes from her visit to Israel. An Arab actress headlined a

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local production of *My Fair Lady*. Jews and Arabs alike take to the op-ed pages of newspapers like *Ha'aretz* to debate political issues. Religious literacy is part of military training for the armed forces. Street signs are labeled in Arabic, and Arabic is an official language of Israel. And she calls Israel's systematic discrimination against its Arab citizens a form of "affirmative action" for Jews.

To show how disingenuous this line of argument is, let's turn the situation around. Consider the case of the Jewish minority in Morocco. Jews have lived in the country for more than 2,000 years. Newspapers regularly carry news of the community's cultural and religious events. Jews and Muslims venerate the same saints. Serge Berdugo, a Jew, served as minister of tourism in the 1990s and is now an ambassador at large. André Azoulay, the current adviser to the king, is Jewish. So is the country's most popular comedian, Gad El Maleh, and one of its most celebrated novelists, Edmond Amran El Maleh. One could put together a virtually endless list of these facts, but none of them would detract from this other truth: Last year, a Pew Research Center poll showed that 88 percent of Moroccans have a negative view of Jews; as shameful as this figure is, any serious discussion of Morocco's Jewish minority would have to include it. Meanwhile, in Israel, the Haifa-based Center Against Racism found that 68 percent of Jews polled revealed they were unwilling to live next to an Arab neighbor. Acknowledging anti-Semitism in some parts of the Arab world, therefore, should not require us to gloss over anti-Arab and anti-Muslim feelings in Israel. This reductionist way of thinking permeates *The Trouble With Islam Today* and gets tiresome very quickly. When Manji argues that Arabs and Muslims must learn to think differently about their present, she writes, "liberal Muslims have to get vocal about this fact: Washington is the unrealized hope, not the lead criminal." For all her advocacy of new modes of thinking, she seems not to have entertained another possibility: Washington can be both.

The Caged Virgin and *The Trouble With Islam Today* are billed as profound meditations on faith and searing critiques of Islam's treatment of women and minorities, but they are riddled with inaccuracies and generalizations. In their persistent conflating of religion, civilization, geographical region and very distinct cultures, these books are more likely to obfuscate than educate.

None of this is to suggest that there are not serious issues facing Muslim women today. Still less does it mean that we should excuse violence and oppression, in some relativist fashion, because they happen to take place in the region broadly defined as "Islam." Those who believe in gender equality have every reason to be concerned about radical Islamist parties that view women as mere vessels, defined by their reproductive powers. These right-wing Islamist parties resist changes in civil codes that grant women more rights or, worse, want to impose antiquated and dangerous forms of Sharia. It is therefore particularly troubling that they have made electoral gains in Palestine, Iraq, Egypt, Morocco and elsewhere.

So now what? Where does this leave feminists of all stripes who genuinely care about the civil rights of their Muslim sisters? A good first step would be to stop treating Muslim women as a silent, helpless mass of undifferentiated beings who think alike and face identical problems, and instead to recognize that each country and each society has its own unique issues. A second would be to question and critically assess the well-intentioned but factually inaccurate books that often serve as the very basis for discussion. We need more dialogue and less polemic. A third would be to acknowledge that women—and men—in Muslim societies face problems of underdevelopment (chief among them illiteracy and poverty) and that tackling them would go a long way toward reducing inequities. As the colonial experience of the past century has proved, aligning with an agenda of war and domination will not result in the advancement of women's rights. On the contrary, such a top-down approach is bound to create a nationalist counter-reaction that, as we have witnessed with Islamist parties, can be downright catastrophic. Rather, a bottom-up approach, where the many local, homegrown women's organizations are fully empowered stands a better chance in the long run. After all, isn't this how Western feminists made their own gains toward equality?

Muslim women are used as pawns by Islamist movements that make the control of women's lives a foundation of their retrograde agenda, and by Western governments that use them as an excuse for building empire. These women have become a politicized class, prevented by edicts and bombs from taking charge of their own destinies. The time has come for the pawns to be queened. ■

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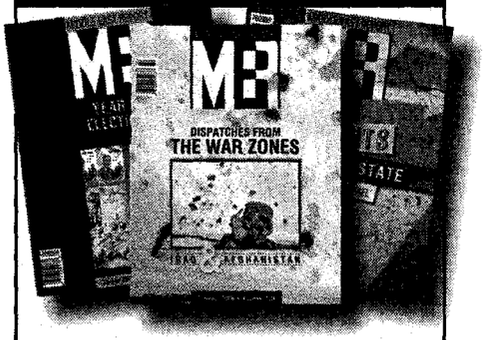

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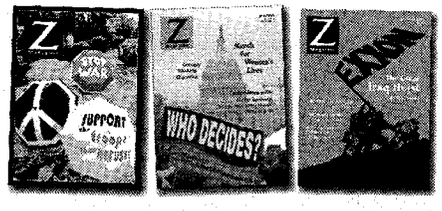

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FILMS

Local Hero

STUART KLAWANS

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL • A PRAIRIE HOME COMPANION • THE DA VINCI CODE

Organize if you can, mourn if you will, but above all take heart. Courage, which conventional movies sell you by the rusty bucketful, springs fresh on all sides in this year's Human Rights Watch International Film Festival. Here the valiant may wear a modest suit and fuss over samples at a trade show; or tramp through iridescent sludge, to wave a sarcastic arm at a profiteer's villa; or shiver with their children high in the Andes, where a shack's strongest heat source is a woman's indignation. In the condescending phrase of marketing consultants, these pictures would be "scenes of ordinary, everyday heroism." Unglamorous, sure, but ordinary? Not on your life.

Two dozen documentaries and narrative features are screening in this seventeenth edition of the festival, which will travel to forty cities in the United States and Canada after its launch, on June 8, at New York's Walter Reade Theater (co-presented by the Film Society of Lincoln Center). Some selections, notably those about the "war on terror" and the terror of war, are scheduled for theatrical release and so will pass for now without comment. (Watch this space for Michael Winterbottom's *The Road to Guantánamo* and James Longley's *Iraq in Fragments*.) Many others must go unaddressed simply because they're many.

But although a complete festival review might be impossible, a part can still stand for the whole. Here are notes on three of this year's documentaries, and their heroes, as seen in the section on economic globalization.

Switch Off (*Apaga y Vámonos*) by Manel Mayol is unusual in that it shows you traditional, physical courage: the kind demonstrated in the Andes by women of the Pehuenche-Mapuche people when they jump to their feet and smash every breakable object in the room, while screaming bloody curses at a Chilean government official. The cause of this difference of opinion: The administration of then-President Eduardo Frei had decided to let a Spanish corporation, Endesa, flood Mapuche lands and force villagers into new areas high above the snow line, for the sake of building hydroelectric dams on the Bíobío River.

Switch Off relates this recent history in a highly textured way, using interviews with Mapuche activists like Mireya Figueroa and Alihuen Antileo; quasi-meditative views of the river and mountains; archival provocations (such as a photograph of the head of Endesa, shown in younger days, giving the Fascist salute); and a running gag of the filmmaker phoning the Endesa press office, Michael Moore style, only to be told that the spokesman is once again at lunch. The effect of this mélange is so striking that I began to wish for a little less art and a little more exposition. After the screening, I had to catch up on my reading to learn when the dams were built and what exactly the World Bank had to do with them. That said, I will remember *Switch Off* for a long time for Mayol's interviews with baffled, angry Mapuche villagers, who were pressured to sign relocation agreements and wound up living in the snow, and for his testimony from opponents of the dam, who found themselves being prosecuted under anti-terrorist statutes, based on the testimony of masked witnesses.

Source, by Martin Marecek and Martin Skalsky, is in some ways even more disjunctive than *Switch Off*; but then, surrealist effects are unavoidable when you're documenting the Baku oilfields in Azerbaijan. While functionaries of the national oil company boast that the environment is pristine, the camera surveys a nightmare landscape of fragmentary concrete, rusted iron and black, viscous sand. While a would-be farmer insists, as if trying to convince himself, that "oil isn't unhealthy," his starved-looking cow grazes beside inky pools. You watch segments of a promotional video, complete with patriotic folk singers, praising life in Baku; after which you see unscripted women cry out to the camera: "Please take us abroad! We don't want to live here!"

Your principal guide through this mad-

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ness is Mirvari Gahramanli, a dissident heroine who identifies for you the beneficiaries of Azerbaijan's oil economy (the reigning Aliyev clan; British Petroleum) and the victims (workers whose uniforms, like their pay envelopes, are threadbare; journalists who may be committing suicide when they allege that all is not well; radioactive children; cows). More than once, Gahramanli and her fellow hotheads observe that the United States pressed for regime change next door in Georgia—but, of course, Georgia doesn't have oil. A brief animated sequence makes the connection for you: From the tick-tocking silhouettes of oil rigs, set amid grazing cartoon cows, a black line representing the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline runs leftward across the screen toward a Western city, where little stick-figure men putter about in puffing cars.

But for a deep, wide-ranging account of today's global relationships—from the misery within enclaves of production to the slightly smoggy good times in the lands of consumption—you will need to watch Marc and Nick Francis's remarkable *Black Gold*, one of the strongest documentaries I've seen in the Human Rights Watch Festival, or for that matter outside it. Its hero is Tadesse Meskela, general manager of the Oromo Coffee Farmers Co-operative Union in Ethiopia: an umbrella organization for some 70,000 coffee growers, who have watched the price of their crop plummet while international demand soars.

Black Gold brings together both parts of this story. On the side of production, the film takes you from the processing plant and warehouses in Addis Ababa—where women hand-sort the good beans from the bad for 50 cents a day—down to Ethiopia's southern mountains, where Meskela meets with coffee growers whose richest aspiration is for clean drinking water and a school for their children. On the side of circulation and consumption, the film goes onto the floor of the New York Commodities Exchange (where world coffee prices are set), into the Illy packing factory (where the CEO speaks almost mystically of the perfection of coffee), over to the World Barista Championship in Seattle (where great coffee is celebrated by fist-pumping and hoots). The contrasts are sometimes ironic and sometimes heartbreaking. A cheery scene shot at the original Starbucks is followed by views of the Therapeutic Feeding Center in Sidama—the region that supplies Starbucks's Ethiopian beans—where low coffee prices have left growers desperate, and their children malnourished or worse.

That's the feel-bad part of *Black Gold*. The feel-good part is Meskela's indefatigable quest to circumvent the commodities market and make direct, fair-trade deals with specialty distributors. Maybe this doesn't sound to you like a pulse-quickening enterprise (especially if you're full of Starbucks); but to 70,000 Ethiopian farmers, Meskela's handshakes are hope itself.

The festival continues through June 22. For information, phone (212) 875-5600 or visit www.filmlinc.com. As a sidebar, the festival this year presents an installation of videos from The Media That Matters Film Festival: a touring and online selection of sixteen shorts by independent—extremely independent—young people and activists. For more information: www.mediathatmattersfest.org.

Welcome for the last time to *A Prairie Home Companion*, brought to you from the Fitzgerald Theater in St. Paul, Minnesota, by Garrison Keillor, a crew of movie stars having a ball playing dress-up, director Robert Altman in an uncharacteristically genial mood and, of course, Powdermilk Biscuits. This is the last live broadcast—well, not live; we're watching a movie—of a show that's been on the radio "since Jesus was in third grade," a turn of phrase that doesn't sound so cynical when you consider that most of the songs being performed tonight are old gospel numbers of the "meet on that beautiful shore" variety. The show can't linger here on the near shore because a Texas conglomerate recently bought station WLT and will be knocking down the Fitzgerald Theater as soon as its walking, yodeling relics of Americana have shuffled offstage. You might think this act of wanton cultural desecration would be halted by an angel of God—one of them happens to be drifting around in a white raincoat, positioning herself so that light bulbs shine behind her golden hair—but she's been sent on a different mission, and besides, she seems to retain just the ghost of a grudge against Garrison Keillor.

She's not the only character to do so. And yet, considering that he's the originator of the real *Prairie Home Companion*, author of the screenplay and emcee of this simulated broadcast, Keillor is so becomingly modest (or is it Norwegianly dour?) that he doesn't star in his own movie. The outstanding male actor in the ensemble cast is Kevin Kline, playing Keillor's private-eye alter ego, Guy Noir. Kline's performance is essentially

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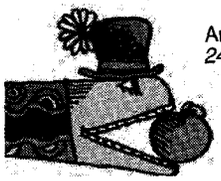

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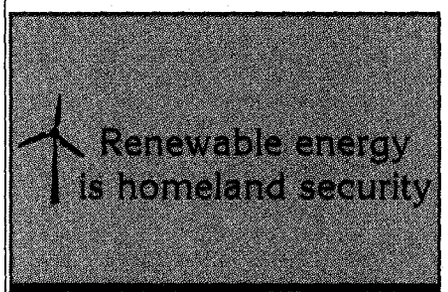

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a series of pratfalls, each of them its own little poem—and not a Hopkins poem, either. Herrick. The outstanding actress is Meryl Streep, here draped in thrift-shop layers of country-singer clothes, as Lily Tomlin's sister and stage partner. Tomlin plays the tough, self-contained alto of the act. Streep is the outgoing soprano who bursts forth so brilliantly, even when miserable, that she could supply all the sunlight that Minnesota (and Keillor) lack.

A Prairie Home Companion is surely the bounciest, cheeriest musical I've ever seen on the subject of death and failure. It's brightened by cinematographer Ed Lachman (who lights everything and everyone as if for the stage), by dozens of mildly off-color jokes (recited in an unbroken string by cowboy singers Woody Harrelson and John C. Reilly) and of course by Altman, whose unflagging energy and delight in actorly collisions make *A Prairie Home Companion* into a sort of one-set, real-time *Nashville*.

That would be *Nashville* without the scope and ambition. On the plus side, though, this movie has Lindsay Lohan.

My spiritual adviser, Rabbi Simcha Feffeferman, is learning to use e-mail. Lucky me. Rebbe@AnsheTsurris.org writes:

Da Vinci Code director Ron Howard, known as Opie = O.P. Symbolologically, this means Opus Payee, ancient Hollywood brotherhood! They make fun of you for watching their movies, and still they get paid!

Writer Akiva Goldsman obviously descended from Rabbi Akiva of blessed memory, who derived volumes of law even from the squiggles on letters of holy Torah. Strange. Why didn't *this* Akiva derive so much as a piece herring from a "book" everybody reads?

Also a mystery: Audrey Tautou = tow to = 22, *not* high caliber! Why her for this movie? She's French, she's pretty. Eleanor Powell she's not, let alone the living vulva of Jesus Christ.

And Mr. Big Star Tom Hanks with his Harvard Professor hair—deeper mystery. Change "H" to "Y" and you got Tom Yanks! Does he? All he's pulling here is a straight face, and then not even.

You see the pattern? It all works by opposites! The secret code is, "Grail, shmail. Just give us the money." But what I say, like we did in yeshiva, is, "*The truth is out there.*"

Gillian Anderson—some Magdalene *she'd* make! ■

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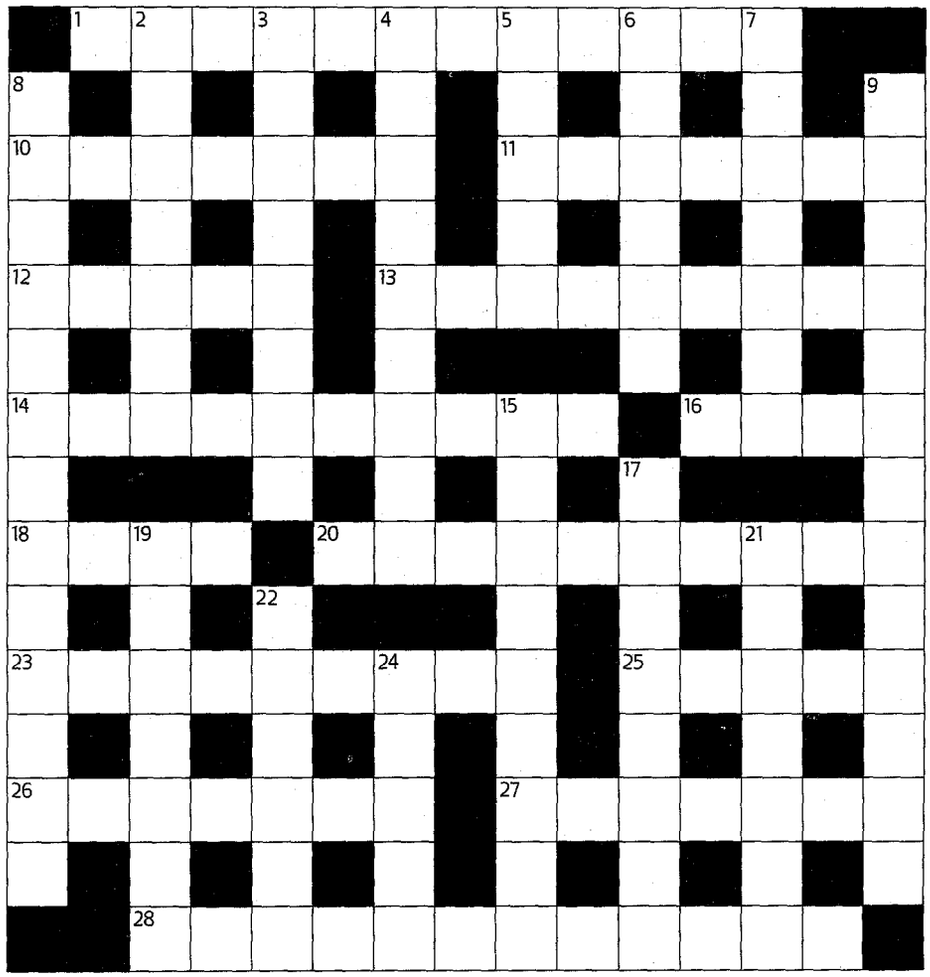

ACROSS

1 Rather coy to improperly cite the following? True, perhaps, but that's Design for Living! (12)

10 A Holy Roman Emperor seems to be rather hirsute, nominally. (7)

11 At lunch, perhaps, one might do it before opening the door. (7)

12 A day most people celebrate in South Africa. (5)

13 A strange noun theme is where to look for something to eat. (2,3,4)

14 Certainly not a hard road to travel, but many people would like to be on it. (4,6)

16 The game that obviously gathers dust—perhaps found in the collar or the ear. (4)

18 Crazy, as some say, to be found in the belfry. (4)

20 Not firmly grounded, and not a good place for decision-making. (2,2,3,3)

23 Lost music is scrambled and aired on TV and radio. (9)

25 An unpleasant drip, with an annoying tone. (5)

26 A slice of pie given myself—which could be the very thing! (7)

27 Took the air, getting to dine possibly, when the prince is in. (7)

28 Is it close to the curb, where one shoots with precision and finds rather disreputable types? (12)

DOWN

2 Turns around to find a lot of decomposed stuff on the broken-down seat. (7)

3 The horseman of a famous tale might be missing the boss. (8)

4 Describing what one might fly on, or but oddly a thing that might be necessary for the stage performance. (9)

5 Where you might find a case for getting to woo someone. (5)

6 Not so pretty a carpet made to recline in. (6)

7 A net result might be to sort of tear into what beggars do. (7)

8 At one time they used to shoot these, which somehow stumble onto old-fashioned smacks. (13)

9 West Pointers might do this on parade, and throw it back twice! (13)

15 Examples of brilliant people—one in Germany belonging to Gertrude, perhaps. (9)

17 Sort of has to depend on something inside, with one seeing how they might kidnap a victim of the city. (8)

19 Putting on rubbers first, it would be saying everything is OK for pounding things down. (7)

21 A good seaman to work out my puzzle—but you might forgive him so. (7)

22 A thoroughgoing attempt to end the inning? (3,3)

24 Mr. Lincoln may go to the French, but the poplar is American. (5)

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SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3038

R	E	J	E	C	T	I	O	N		S	L	I	P	S
O		I		L		N		A		T		N		A
B	I	G	H	O	R	N		T	R	A	F	F	I	C
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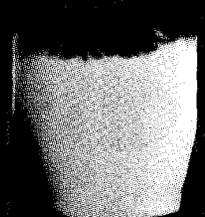
We discovered the "Secret" to a smooth silhouette...

World's most comfortable bra eliminates bra bulge and makes you look 10 pounds thinner—*Bra-vo*!

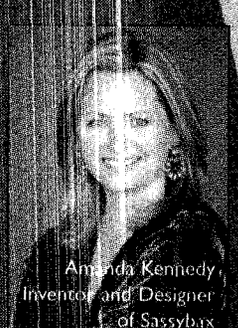
Bulky fabrics, pinching hooks, unsightly seams, back aches, bra lines, bad fit—what crazy person invented the conventional bra anyway! Tired of dealing everyday with unflattering and cumbersome bras, Amanda Kennedy, a former actress and model, has finally perfected a comfortable flattering bra for real women. It's the end of the line for visible bra lines and the dreaded back bulge—two big fashion faux pas. Amanda designed the ingenious Sassybax™, a cure for the most common problems of old fashioned bras. The Sassybax™ seamless stretch material is made of super smooth microfiber that hugs your body in a slimming silhouette. This fiber will make you look sleeker and thinner as it smoothes and softens any unsightly back bulges.

Before



After

It's amazing that an actress like Amanda who spent so much time getting noticed invented a product that is meant to be invisible. She spent 11 years guest starring in such shows as *Cheers*, *Remington Steele*, *Dallas* and *Hart to Hart*, but as she tiptoed into her 40's, she realized that her clothes didn't look so sleek anymore. Her uncomfortable bra accentuated every bulge. Back bulge is not a woman's fault—it's the bra. Amanda poured herself into helping real women, not 19-year-old girls with surgically enhanced, anti-gravity cleavage. Her inspiration came from control top panty hose that Amanda cut, clipped and formed into her first prototype. Then she redesigned a model in the supersoft microfiber that felt like wearing nothing at all, but still offered excellent support even when her full figured DD sized friends tried it on. Now the fashion world is abuzz with Sassybax. It's been raved about on *The View*, *Good Morning America*, *CBS News* and *FOX News*. You may have read the great reviews in *Time*, *Glamour*, and *InStyle*. The "before and after" video on *Good Morning America* was startling. The host was quoted as saying with Sassybax, "She's completely line free, all the lumps and bumps are gone, she looks terrific."



Amanda Kennedy, Inventor and Designer of Sassybax

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"I think I've found a new wardrobe staple that I could wear day and night. Thanks. And good luck with your line; it's well needed."

Vanessa Williams, actress, singer and former Miss America

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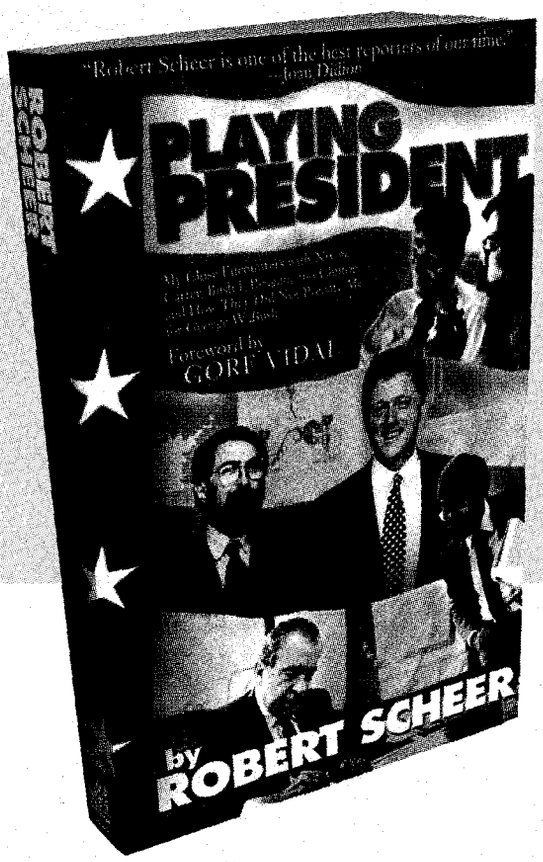
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Foreword by GORE VIDAL
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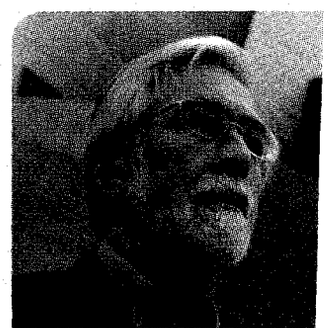

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